

RPTR ZAMORA

EDTR HUMKE

SELECT COMMITTEE ON BENGHAZI,
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
WASHINGTON, D.C.

INTERVIEW OF: [REDACTED]

Thursday, March 26, 2015

Washington, D.C.

The interview in the above matter was held in Room HVC-205,
Capitol Visitor Center, commencing at 10:01 a.m.

Present: Representative Westmoreland.

Appearances:

For the SELECT COMMITTEE ON BENGHAZI:

SHARON JACKSON, DEPUTY CHIEF COUNSEL

CARLTON DAVIS, INVESTIGATOR

SARA BARRINEAU, INVESTIGATOR

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For the U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE:

AUSTIN EVERS, SENIOR ADVISOR

Ms. Clarke. This is a transcribed interview of [REDACTED] conducted by the House Select Committee on Benghazi. This interview is being conducted voluntarily as part of the committee's investigation into the attacks on the U.S. diplomatic facilities in Benghazi, Libya, and related matters pursuant to House Resolution 567 of the 113th Congress, and House Resolution 5 of the 114th Congress.

Could you please state your name for the record.

Mr. [REDACTED] For the record, my name is [REDACTED].

Ms. Clarke. And for the record, will you please spell your last name.

Mr. [REDACTED] Last name is spelled [REDACTED].

Ms. Clarke. Thank you.

Mr. [REDACTED] You're welcome.

Ms. Clarke. This committee appreciates your appearance at this interview, and we appreciate you coming in voluntarily. My name is Sheria Clarke. I'm with the committee's majority staff. And we'll just take a moment to have everyone introduce themselves for the record.

Mr. Evers. Austin Evers from the State Department.

Ms. Jackson. Sharon Jackson with the majority staff.

Mr. Kenny. Peter Kenny with the minority staff.

Ms. Sawyer. Heather Sawyer with the minority staff.

Mr. Woolfork. Brent Woolfork on the minority staff.

Mr. Davis. I'm Carlton Davis, and I work for Mr. Gowdy.

Ms. Barrineau. I'm Sara Barrineau with majority staff.

Ms. Clarke. And before we begin, I would like to go over some

ground rules and explain how the interview will proceed.

Mr. [REDACTED] Excellent.

Ms. Clarke. The way the questions will proceed is that a member from the majority will ask questions for up to an hour and then the minority will have an opportunity to ask questions for an equal period of time, if they choose. We will firmly adhere to the 1-hour time limit for each side. Questions may only be asked by a member of the committee or designated staff members. And I will rotate back and forth 1 hour per side until we're finished with our questions.

Mr. [REDACTED] Okay.

Ms. Clarke. Unlike in testimony or a deposition in Federal court, the committee format is not bound by the rules of evidence. The witness or their counsel may raise objections for privilege subject to review by the chairman of the committee. If these objections can't be resolved in the interview, the witness can be required to return for a deposition or hearing.

Members and staff of the committee, however, are not permitted to raise objections when the other side is asking questions. This has not been an issue we've encountered in the past, but I want to make sure you're clear on the process.

Mr. [REDACTED] Thank you.

Ms. Clarke. Currently, this will begin in an unclassified setting. If there are any questions that you believe call for a classified answer, then we'll move into a classified setting at a later point and address those questions.

Mr. [REDACTED] Very well.

Ms. Clarke. You're welcome to confer with counsel at any time throughout the interview. If something needs to be clarified, feel free to ask. We want to make sure that you understand the questions.

Mr. [REDACTED] Okay.

Ms. Clarke. If you need to discuss anything with your counsel, we'll go off the record and stop the clock to provide you this opportunity.

Mr. [REDACTED] Okay.

Ms. Clarke. We like to take a break whenever it's convenient for you. This could be after every hour of questioning or after a couple of rounds, whatever works best for you.

Mr. [REDACTED] Okay.

Ms. Clarke. If you need anything, a glass of water, use of the facilities, confer with your counsel, feel free to ask and we'll take a break.

Mr. [REDACTED] Thank you.

Ms. Clarke. And I apologize, I'm working through a cold so --

Mr. [REDACTED] Aren't we all.

Ms. Clarke. -- I will occasionally cough.

As you can see, an official reporter is taking down everything you say to make a written record, so we ask that you give verbal responses to all questions, yes, no, as opposed to nods of heads and I'll ask the reporter to jump in if she sees a nonverbal response.

Mr. [REDACTED] Okay.

Ms. Clarke. So, we should both try not to talk over each other so it's easier to get a clear record. We want you to answer our questions in the most complete and truthful manner possible, so we'll take our time and repeat or clarify the questions if necessary. If you have any questions and if you don't understand any of our questions, please feel free to let us know.

Mr. [REDACTED] Thank you.

Ms. Clarke. If you honestly don't know the answer to a question or do not remember, it's best not to guess. Just give us your best recollection. And if there are things you don't know or don't remember, if you know someone who might have a better recollection of it, just give us that individual's name.

You're required to answer questions from Congress truthfully. Do you understand that?

Mr. [REDACTED] I do.

Ms. Clarke. This also applies to questions posed by congressional staff in an interview. Do you understand that?

Mr. [REDACTED] I do.

Ms. Clarke. Witnesses that knowingly provide false testimony could be subject to criminal prosecution for perjury for making false statements. Do you understand that?

Mr. [REDACTED] I do.

Ms. Clarke. Is there any reason you are unable to provide truthful answers to today's questions?

Mr. [REDACTED] None whatsoever.

Ms. Clarke. Great. So, that's the end of my preamble. Does the minority have anything they'd like to add?

Ms. Sawyer. We're all set. Thank you.

Ms. Clarke. All right. So the clock reads now 10:06, and we'll get started with the first hour of questions.

Mr. [REDACTED] Very well.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q So Mr. [REDACTED], can you just give us a brief background of when you started with the State Department and some of your various assignments.

A Very happy to. I joined the Department of State in 1991, and after initial training, I served first at the U.S. Embassy in Amman, Jordan; following that, I served at the U.S. Consulate in Naples, Italy; I served then on consecutive assignments at the State Department in Washington, first in the Bureau of Political Military Affairs, then as the desk officer responsible for Yemen, Kuwait, and Bahrain in the Office of Arabian Peninsula Affairs.

I served with the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission in Kosovo; following that at the U.S. Embassy in Sarajevo, Bosnia. I returned to Washington then and served consecutive assignments first in the office responsible for our relations with NATO, and then secondly, in the office responsible for the Balkans. Following that, I served as the political and economic counselor of our embassy in Budapest, Hungary, returning for a brief interim assignment in the Office of

Arabian Peninsula Affairs; following which, I served in the office of policy planning, SP, as we call it on the secretary staff; and then as the director of the office responsible for economic and development affairs in the Office of International Organization Affairs.

I am presently in long-term Arabic language training prior to assignment overseas.

Q And during your tenure with the State Department, did you have an opportunity to serve in Benghazi, Libya?

A I did, in fact. I served as the principal officer in Benghazi, Libya, in July and August of 2012.

Q And how did you become aware of that opportunity? Were you assigned, or did you volunteer for that opportunity?

A I volunteered for that opportunity.

Q Was it something that was advertised throughout the State Department?

A I don't immediately recall whether or not it was advertised. I was personal friends with Ambassador Stevens, as well as with other officials who were working in the Near East Bureau at that time.

Q Do you recall if Ambassador Stevens or someone in the Near East Bureau requested that or asked you to become a part of the this assignment?

A I volunteered.

Q Okay.

A Obviously, it did occur. But as I recall, I volunteered. I initiated the inquiry.

Q Okay. Prior to your arrival in Benghazi, what did you know about the assignment in Benghazi? What was your role going to be as the principal officer on the task that you were going to perform?

A I spoke to a number of officials in Washington prior to departure for Benghazi. I understood the role of our mission in Benghazi to be to observe, analyze, interpret, and report on events on the ground, to advocate for American policy positions there.

Q And what did you know about the -- in speaking with individuals in Washington or anyone that was in Libya, what were you aware of regarding the security situation in Benghazi?

A Based on my consultations at that time and based on media reports, I understood this security situation to be uncertain overall.

Q What do you mean by uncertain?

A I understood before my arrival that in the immediate aftermath of the downfall of the Qadhafi regime and the liberation of the country, that Libya was in a transitional period. I understood that on the ground there were various factions, and I understood that the central government authority in Tripoli was working to establish its control and authority over the security situation.

Q Okay. Prior to going to Benghazi, did you participate in the foreign affairs counterterrorism training or similar training?

A I did. Over the course of my career, I've had a variety of security-related training. And in the immediate run-up to my departure for Benghazi, I had special training, commonly referred to in the State Department as "Crash and Bang," which gives instruction

in a variety of issues to include paramedic training, weapons training, and defensive and offensive driving techniques.

Q Now, is that different than FACTS training?

A I believe it is. Among other training that I've had over the course of my career, for example, I've had training in observation of surveillance, general security awareness. Crash and Bang is specifically focused for officers who are bound for special posts at that time, for example, Iraq and Afghanistan among them.

Q Okay. Now, was this a requirement for you to take that course prior to going to Benghazi?

A Yes, it was.

Q And do you know if that was a requirement for other -- was that for your position only, or was it for all individuals that were going to Benghazi?

A I don't know.

Q Okay. Do you know if your predecessor or your successor took those courses as well or were required to take those courses?

A I do not know.

Q Okay. Now, you stated that you arrived in Benghazi in July. Did you -- was there a time gap between your arrival and the previous principal officers leaving Benghazi?

A Yes, there was. There --

Q Do you know how long that timeframe was?

A I believe it was a matter of weeks.

Q Okay. Did you have an opportunity to speak with the

previous principal officer?

A I did, here in Washington.

Q Okay. And did the principal officer provide you any turnover notes or any documents related to her -- the things that she was pursuing and what she thought you might be interested in pursuing as the principal officer?

A We spoke in person here in Washington following her return and prior to my departure. Upon arrival in Benghazi, there were a number of notes, contact lists, et cetera, at the mission as well.

Q Okay. So, you mentioned a little bit that some of your -- what you were discussed -- prior to leaving Washington, you talked to some individuals in Washington about what your role would be in Benghazi, to observe, analyze, and interpret events on the ground. What was -- did you have an understanding of what the U.S. interest in Libya was at that time?

A I did discuss our Libya policy overall, our interests there, and then particularly how our presence in Benghazi fit into that broader equation, yes.

Q And how did the presence in Benghazi fit into the U.S. interests overall in Libya?

A Benghazi played a unique role in Libya, as the cradle of its revolution. And we, the United States, played a unique role there. I thought that our presence was both practically and symbolically important. We were able to establish and maintain contacts across a wide spectrum, not only across the political spectrum but academia in

the business community as well. I felt that our presence there was valued and considered very important among the wide range of Libyans that I met, not least because it demonstrated our attention to the process of the transition.

Q You said that you felt that the presence was practical and symbolic. Can we break that down a little bit. Why did you feel that the U.S. presence was practical?

A Practically, we were able to make contacts with people on the ground in all walks of life. We were able to observe events in realtime. We were able to emphasize U.S. Government positions to them.

Symbolically, the Libyans with whom I met, across their political spectrum, expressed how much they valued American presence there, how much they thought it was important, how much they thought it sent a clear message to them as they worked through their transition.

Q What was the message that they thought the U.S. presence sent to them?

A They felt that it represented our continuing attention to the transition. They felt, in particular, that our presence there was a symbol of our attention, and they felt that as they turned to their elections and into the formulation of their constitution, they felt that our good offices and our role as an honest broker was especially important.

Q You mentioned the elections. So, you had recently arrived when the elections in Libya occurred on the 7th, is that correct,

July 7, 2012?

A Correct.

Q Can you describe for us what the environment was like leading up to the elections and following the elections?

A Yes. Broadly, the elections were the principal focus of attention. There was an international presence there, not just in Benghazi but across the country as these were nationwide elections. It was the object of great public focus. In the immediate run-up to the election, there were a number of incidents. On election day itself, I was one of the international observers at polling stations in and around Benghazi.

Q When you said there were a number of incidents leading up to the election day, can you elaborate further on those?

A There were reports of attempts to ensure that polling stations did not open, for example. There were reports of attempts to interfere with ballots or ballot boxes, for example.

Q Were these interferences by one particular organization, or were there multiple organizations involved in these events?

A There were various allegations as to responsibility for the events. The prevailing theory at that time was that these were the efforts of separatist elements. I did not personally witness any of these events. I want to emphasize that these were largely based on reports in the media or elsewhere, and that in my contacts on election day, I did not see any effort to impede voters or to otherwise interfere in the process.

Q Okay. And following the election, what was the environment like, within the -- in the timeframe of a week after the election, what was the environment in Benghazi, Libya, like?

A There was euphoria, frankly, among most of the Libyans with whom I spoke. They felt that the elections had been successful in terms of their conduct. They thought that this demonstrated Libya's ability to clear a very important hurdle. They felt that the election results themselves represented a consensus for moderate government. And the majority of my Libyan contacts then identified the formulation of a constitution as the next hurdle.

Q Prior to the general national elections, were there also elections that occurred in Benghazi? This may have been before your tenure there, but were there local elections that occurred in Benghazi?

A I do not know. Obviously, my expertise is principally regarding my limited time there. I did meet one official, for example, who I understood had been involved in the preparations for local elections, so I believe that's true, but I don't have the firsthand knowledge.

Q Okay. As the principal officer, can you just describe for us some of the -- well, describe for us the movements and the restrictions or the parameters for movements within the city and outside of the city that you had.

A Overall, I would describe our movements and indeed all of our efforts and all of our actions as prudent. We remained in constant contact with a wide range of local and international officials. As

a matter of course, when we conducted movements in and around Benghazi, we did so in multi-vehicle convoys. We conducted movements with RSO support at all times. If there were, for example, reports of incidents in particular places, we would take that into account in determining whether and how we would conduct movements in and around the city.

Q When you say particular places, do you mean that there were certain areas that if there was an incident there, that you would take into account how you conducted movements, or if there were just incidents in general that you heard about you would take that into account?

A Both.

Q Okay. Now, you said that you always conducted your movements with RSO support?

A Uh-huh.

Q Was that something -- was that in place at the time that you came or was that different -- do you know if that was different for the previous principal officer?

A I simply don't know what the practice was prior to my arrival. From the time of my arrival and throughout my tenure there, this was our practice.

Q Okay. And how many DS agents were present in Benghazi when you arrived?

A I don't recall if it was four or five.

Q Okay. Do you recall if the number, during your time in Benghazi, ever reached five?

A It may have at a time of overlap, during the transition, during the rotation of personnel. I don't immediately recall.

Q Do you recall what the, in general, what was the number of DS agents that were present with you in Benghazi?

A On average, four.

Q Four. And was that -- did you feel that was sufficient for you to be able to conduct movements that you needed to make?

A I felt that we were able to do our job. I felt that we did so prudently. I felt that we were able to ensure that -- what movements we felt we needed to conduct we did so to maximize security. And I felt that we had the flexibility if we felt that it was more prudent, for example, to host a meeting than to travel to it, that we would adjust to that.

Q During your time there, did you have instances where you felt that you needed more DS agents present?

A Through my time there, I felt that we were able to work effectively with the personnel we had on hand.

Q Did you ever request -- send a request to Tripoli or back to D.C. requesting for more DS agents or more security?

A Communication on security issues was principally through Tripoli. As a subsidiary post, we communicated first with the embassy rather than directly to Washington. I don't remember specifically making personnel-related requests. Certainly, our RSO staff was in direct communication with RSO Tripoli as well. And certainly, the broad security situation overall was part of our broad dialogue, both

with Tripoli and then back to the department in Washington as well.

Q Okay. When you arrived in Benghazi, can you describe for us -- a brief description of the compound, the types of buildings that were in the compound and the size of the compound.

A Of course. The compound was a relatively large piece of property in a residential neighborhood in Benghazi. I was told following my arrival that it had two landlords, that the -- what was the sum total of our compound was owned by different individuals. It had at one time been divided by a wall, which by the time of my arrival had been removed.

On the compound, there was a residential building, which was where my quarters were. There was an office building and a third building called the canteen, which had the cooking facilities and also capacity if people were there, for example, to overnight.

Q And did the DS agents also reside in the building where your quarters were?

A Some did, yes.

Q Okay. And then was there also another building that housed the -- what has been referred to as the QRF or the Quick Response Force?

A There was a building that housed the Libyan security personnel that was adjacent to one of the gates, yes.

Q What was your understanding of the link of the entire mission, as far as how long was the mission going to be present in Benghazi?

A My understanding was that through my tenure, and at the time

of my departure, there were discussions ongoing about the long-term disposition of our presence in Benghazi.

Q And were you involved in those discussions?

A I was, yes, to the extent that I was in contact with Embassy Tripoli and afforded them my perspective based on my experience there.

Q And what was your perspective?

A I felt that our presence there was valuable. I thought it was effective. And I thought there was a role for a modest and a flexible continuing diplomatic presence in Benghazi.

Q What did you mean by modest and flexible?

A I felt that it need not be a large mission. I felt that, for example, with support from Tripoli on specific issues, that we could be effective in gathering information, conveying information, and assisting the Libyans as they worked through their transition.

Q What were some of the specific issues that you felt you needed support from Tripoli regarding?

A I felt, for example, that we would be able to make good use of visits from consular personnel, for example, who would be able to address concerns of American citizens in the region. I felt that we would also be able to make a good use of visits from public diplomacy personnel, who would be able to ensure that Benghazi was part of our nationwide approach for engagement with the Libyan public.

Q When you said that you felt that the presence could be small, did you believe that the current size was sufficient, or were you -- did you feel that it should be smaller or larger?

A I felt that we were approximately right sized. I don't recall that I ever recommended a specific number. I think that whatever our disposition was, theoretically, there was a point where it would have been too small to be effective, but I felt that, roughly, we were in the neighborhood of being right sized.

Q Okay. Prior to your departure from Benghazi, was there a final decision made about the length of the mission, to your knowledge?

A To my knowledge, there had not been.

Q To your knowledge, what -- did you have an understanding of whether it was -- the decision was leaning more towards continuing the mission in Benghazi or to closing the mission?

A I did not have a sense as to how that debate was or the discussions were going.

Q Okay. Now, just to step back a little bit and talk more about the villas, were you aware of physical -- any type of physical security requirements that are in place for buildings that are -- for buildings that are -- I'm sorry. Let me start over -- physical requirements by the State Department for buildings or for areas such as where you were, as far as like what the setbacks, you mentioned there was a wall and a setback, were you aware of those types of requirements?

A I was aware that there are guidelines, for example, particularly with respect to setback, which I felt in Benghazi we had, given the outer perimeter of that. But in terms of the granular specifics of that, I would rely on RSO.

Q Okay. Did you have any knowledge of whether or not the

facilities in Benghazi met the physical security requirements?

A I did not. I knew that improvements had been made, certainly. I knew that discussion or dialogue on security issues was open and continuing, and I knew that there was an ongoing discussion about the long-term disposition of our presence there.

Q Were you aware of any improvements or requests for improvements made during your time in Benghazi?

A Requests would've been RSO to RSO. I don't immediately recall what any of the technical request, if any, would've been.

Q Would have had discussions with the RSO about requests that he was interested in making?

A We were a small mission, and certainly, discussion of all issues was open and robust.

Q Okay. But you don't recall any specific requests made during your time in Benghazi?

A Sitting here today, sometime after, I don't immediately recall any, no.

Q Okay. So, we talked a little bit about the number of DS agents that were in Benghazi, and we also mentioned that there was a building that housed the QRF. Can you describe for us who the QRF were and what their role was?

A Yes. The QRF was composed of a number of individuals. Their presence predated my arrival. My understanding was that their presence was arranged via a contractual arrangement with the February 17 or 2/17 Militia.

Q And what was your opinion of the QRF that were on the compound as far as their conduct and how they met their contractual obligation?

A I felt their presence was helpful. I felt that they were able to help us communicate with February 17, which was an influential group on the ground. They accompanied us often on movements, which I felt, again, was very helpful as we transited around the city. I felt they were a good source of information. I felt their local knowledge was very helpful for our general awareness.

Q Were you aware of any issues that arose with any members of the individuals from February 17 that were assigned to the QRF?

A I know that the assignment of individuals was initially made by the militia. And as I recall, during my tenure there, one of the members of the QRF left and moved to Tripoli.

Q Do you recall why he left?

A My understanding was that after his departure I was told that he had had an interpersonal conflict with one of the other members of the QRF.

Q So, following the election, I guess around the beginning of August, is my understanding was the Ramadan period?

A Yes.

Q And how long does that period last?

A Ramadan is based on the lunar calendar. It runs usually a matter of some weeks. That year, Ramadan fell at the height of summer, which meant that it was going to be long in duration and that

the individual days would be longest because it runs sunset to sundown. Certainly, several weeks, perhaps even half or even slightly more of my time in Benghazi was during Ramadan.

Q Okay. And did that have any impact on the QRF members, absenteeism or any other types of issues?

A I would say overall, the pace during Ramadan in Benghazi, and more broadly, slowed considerably during the holiday, in terms of just our ability to find officials who were in town for meetings. Many Libyans were on vacation. We were able to ensure that members of the QRF had the opportunity, for example, to be with their families during the holiday, but RSO worked to ensure that we were always able to have sufficient staffing.

Q Were there instances where -- well, let me ask you this: To your knowledge, what was the contractual requirement, the number of individuals that were contractually required to be on compound for the QRF?

A I do not recall, and I never saw the contract.

Q Okay. Were you aware if it was four individuals that were required to be on compound?

A I, again, never saw the contract. I'm not aware.

Q Okay. Were you -- in your discussions with the RSO, did he ever mention to you that there were -- that the number of individuals that were supposed to be on compound at any point during your time there were not -- that number was not reached?

A I do not immediately recall that, no.

Q Okay. During Ramadan, did you -- or were you aware of the RSO requesting any additional security from the Libyan Government or from the police, the Libyan, Benghazi police?

A Yes. I do recall that during my time there we made a formal request of the Libyan authorities to ensure a police presence immediately in the vicinity of the mission.

Q And what prompted that request?

A Over the course of my time there, there were incidents, and I thought it was, again, prudent to try to ensure a local presence as well. This was consistent as well with ongoing efforts to ensure clear local authorities in the realm of security.

Q And was that request for a police presence actually fulfilled?

A It was honored. They did provide a marked Libyan police car with uniformed police officers in it in response to our request. But I do not know if that was permanent or if it continued following my departure.

Q Okay. And do you know if that request had any -- was prompted at all by any absences that may have been caused during the Ramadan period?

A I don't recall whether that was in any way linked to that.

Q Okay.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Before we move on to another topic, I have just a couple follow-up questions to some that Ms. Clarke had asked. I believe you

said that there was approximately a couple-week gap between when [REDACTED] left and you arrived in Benghazi; is that correct?

A There is a gap. I don't know immediately how long it might have been.

Q More than a day or two?

A Certainly more than a day or two.

Q Okay. Was there a reason for the gap? I mean, was it just a matter of traveling in or other commitments, or was there any other reason, any security-related reason for the gap?

A Not to my knowledge. My rotation to Benghazi was to be for a limited period. That period was negotiated by my present office for the period that I was to be overseas. I very much wanted to be there for the elections. That was very much, I think, my goal to be there to ensure that presence. So, I don't recall that that was motivated by that.

Q Okay. So, you were unaware that there was a series of security incidents that occurred in June of 2012 that caused a pause in the coverage of the Benghazi Mission?

A I was aware on the basis of my consultations before departure that there had been incidents in Benghazi. Certainly, security was part of my dialogue during my consultations here. And certainly, I confirmed before my departure for Benghazi, that I should proceed to post and was told to do so.

Q Okay. Did your start date ever change before you actually got there? Did it ever shift in any way?

A There may have been some fluctuation. I don't immediately recall. But I can say broadly in the context of my career overall, it is not uncommon to have start dates slip or move left or right.

Q Okay. And do you recall approximately when you did arrive in Benghazi?

A I believe it was July 2 that I arrived.

Q Approximately, so a little less than a week before the elections?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And then how long did you stay?

A I left Benghazi for Tripoli on August 30, as I recall, and departed from Tripoli on August 31.

Q Okay. When you came into Libya, did you travel in through Tripoli or did you go straight into Benghazi?

A I transited Istanbul direct into Benghazi.

Q Okay. And was Ambassador Stevens on location in Tripoli as the ambassador when you came to Benghazi?

A I don't recall if he was in the country at that time. I recall, for example, that there was, during the time of my tenure in Benghazi, at one point he was out of the country. I don't recall if that was concurrent with my arrival.

Q Okay. But he was the ambassador at the time you went to Benghazi?

A Yes, he was.

Q Okay. And you had stated earlier that you, in discussions

regarding the continued U.S. presence in Benghazi, that you talked with Tripoli. Did I hear that correctly?

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Okay. Who in Tripoli did you converse with?

A Both Ambassador Stevens and the deputy chief of mission.

Q And who was that at that time?

A Greg Hicks.

Q Okay. And did you converse with anyone either back at Main State or elsewhere within the U.S. Government?

A Yes, I did.

Q Okay. And who did you speak with?

A Within the confines of this venue --

Q Uh-huh.

A -- I would like to confirm that I did and suggest that we repair to other facilities.

Q Okay. Did you communicate with anyone from the White House staff? Without specifically who.

A That may have been one of the issues for discussion in the context of a visit to Benghazi.

Q I'm sorry. I didn't follow your answer.

A That may have been discussed in the context of a visit to Benghazi.

Q I think we'll elaborate further later.

You also said that there were -- that when you came to Benghazi that it was approximately the right -- it was right sized, I believe,

is the term you used; is that correct?

A I think that we did not need an enormous presence in Benghazi. I thought there was a role to be played by a presence there. I thought that presence could be flexible. I thought it could be modest. I thought it would be closely coordinated and supplemented by visits, for example, from Tripoli.

Q Okay. And what was that size when you got there? Besides yourself, there were approximately four DS agents. Who else was employed?

A There was also an officer who was assigned as the communicator and to address the management issues as well.

Q Okay. Were there any -- and then did you have some locally-employed staff?

A We did have locally-employed staff, yes.

Q And what was the scope of the locally-employed staff?

A In addition to the support staff who were responsible, for example, for food preparation, maintenance, drivers, for example, we had local staff, one who did office management and translation, and one who was -- we would say broadly, political analyst and adviser.

Q Okay. And you also said that the February 17 QRF individuals that were assigned to the mission would go on movements with you?

A We would often -- we would always travel in convoys. Oft times, there would be a vehicle with QRF as part of that, yes.

Q Okay. Were you aware prior to going into Benghazi that

there had been an issue or problem with the QRF refusing to go on movements outside of the compound?

A No.

Q You were not aware of it. And that did not come up while you were there?

A It did not, to my recollection, no.

Ms. Jackson. Okay. Those are all the follow-up questions I have on your first set.

Mr. Westmoreland. Do you mind?

Ms. Clarke. I do not.

Mr. Westmoreland. Were you ever the principal officer at any of the other posts that you went to?

Mr. [REDACTED] I have been acting deputy chief of mission at post overseas. I have never served at a post which would've had a principal officer in which I served as the principal officer, no.

Mr. Westmoreland. You've mentioned that -- the Crash and Bang course --

Mr. [REDACTED] Yes, sir.

Mr. Westmoreland. -- that you took. You had never been in any environment where you needed that before?

Mr. [REDACTED] I had, in fact. I had had similar training before my assignment to Kosovo in 1989 -- in 1999, rather, that included paramedic training and defensive and offensive driving. And then immediately prior to my assignment to Benghazi, again had the Crash and Bang training. I've served in a number of posts where we received

danger pay, for example, including Kosovo and Bosnia.

Mr. Westmoreland. Okay. When you were in Bosnia and Kosovo and you had this training, was that because it was a conflict going on there?

Mr. [REDACTED] I was in Kosovo in 1999 at a time when there was conflict between the Albanian population and the then-Government of Serbia.

Mr. Westmoreland. So there was a conflict going on. And you mentioned that other people that may have had this training, I guess, would've been people going to Iraq, Afghanistan.

Mr. [REDACTED] Of my classmates in that course were officers who were bound for both of those posts, yes.

Mr. Westmoreland. Okay. And there was some activity going on there too at the time, I guess?

Mr. [REDACTED] I do seem to recall, yes, sir.

Mr. Westmoreland. You said that when you arrived there in July that you felt like that you all were making a difference, you know, with the new government and the turnover, and you were a fair broker?

Mr. [REDACTED] Yes, sir.

Mr. Westmoreland. What type of things were you trying to broker?

Mr. [REDACTED] May I offer you an example?

Mr. Westmoreland. Yeah.

Mr. [REDACTED] In the aftermath of the elections, the majority of the elected members of parliament from Benghazi met at our mission there, to discuss their views on the constitution.

Mr. Westmoreland. On what? On the constitution?

Mr. [REDACTED] On the constitution. And at that venue, we were able to discuss what were the broad outlines of what their constituents hoped to see in a constitution. I felt we were able to convey messages, and most particularly to encourage the parties on the ground to commit themselves to the legal process, first, of the elections, and then secondly, during the transition to turning towards the constitution.

Mr. Westmoreland. So, these things you were brokering, it was basically discussion between the people that were going to be involved in the new government, not between some of the groups that didn't really agree with the new government. I mean, you never -- did you ever meet with the commander of the 17th Brigade?

Mr. [REDACTED] Of February 17?

Mr. Westmoreland. Uh-huh.

Mr. [REDACTED] I did meet with [REDACTED], who was one of the leaders of February 17.

Mr. Westmoreland. Because you said they were influential, right, in the area?

Mr. [REDACTED] Yes, sir.

Mr. Westmoreland. Okay. And so some of those visits that you made, were they influential enough for you to try to meet with their leadership?

Mr. [REDACTED] I tried to meet with a wide range of contacts.

Mr. Westmoreland. Yeah.

Mr. [REDACTED] I tried to meet with individuals who represented, for example, the various political parties, and additionally, from

academia, civil society, et cetera, so that we had an accurate assessment of views. And in that context, I tried to encourage all the parties to work together and to work within the context of the political process during the transition.

Mr. Westmoreland. In any of these discussions with the people in the parliament or any of the Libyan officials did -- or -- anybody discuss the building of a military for them or what they were going to do to secure their country? I mean --

Mr. [REDACTED] I recall a variety of Libyan officials discussing their priorities, to include the development of central security institutions, both internal and an Army, yes.

Mr. Westmoreland. Yeah. I mean, I would think that would be something that, you know, with a new government that you would, you know, want some military to back you up.

When you left in August, I'm sure you were aware of some of the car bombs that went off or maybe the IEDs. I'm sure you were aware of the IED at the wall before you got there. And I'm assuming that you were aware of the attack on the British Ambassador and his carpool, or whatever you want to call it.

Mr. [REDACTED] Uh-huh.

Mr. Westmoreland. When you left Benghazi at the end of August, how many other embassies or western interest were in Benghazi at the time that you left?

Mr. [REDACTED] At the time of my departure, there was a United Nations presence there, which was international. The --

Mr. Westmoreland. And were they located in Benghazi?

Mr. [REDACTED] They were located in Benghazi, yes.

Mr. Westmoreland. Okay.

Mr. [REDACTED] We hosted at one point representatives of the U.K. Mission as they planned to reopen a presence in Benghazi. There --

Mr. Westmoreland. How long had they been closed, do you recall?

Mr. [REDACTED] I don't immediately recall, sir. There was a Maltese consul on the ground, a Turkish consul on the ground, an Egyptian consul on the ground. There was, as I recall, a French Cultural Center. There was an Italian consul, and I believe they were planning a cultural center. Some nations, including Sweden, had honorary consuls on the ground, who might, for example, have been nationals who were given honorary status, as I have seen in other posts.

Mr. Westmoreland. Did they have compounds like, you know, these, you know, the Swedes or the Maltese, did they actually have compounds where they had a envoy or a principal officer or ambassador in those facilities that you talked to?

Mr. [REDACTED] I had counterparts, certainly, within the diplomatic community on the ground. I had occasion to visit the Egyptian consulate, the Turkish consulate, as I immediately recall. And I would occasionally host meetings of international representatives on the ground so that we could share views on the state of play.

Mr. Westmoreland. And when you say consulate, what do you mean by -- I mean, was that a building or was it -- we call ours the temporary

mission facility.

Mr. [REDACTED] Yes.

Mr. Westmoreland. And you're calling theirs a consulate? I mean --

Mr. [REDACTED] That is what they called their facilities there, yes.

Mr. Westmoreland. Okay. Now, did they have an embassy in Tripoli also?

Mr. [REDACTED] I do not immediately know. Broadly speaking, based on previous experience, my impression has been that when one has -- when a nation has a consulate in a country, there is usually an embassy in the capital.

Mr. Westmoreland. But the British had closed theirs, the Italians had closed theirs, and I think there was some other countries that had basically closed their consulates or mission facilities or whatever in Benghazi; is that correct?

Mr. [REDACTED] There had been some flux in that. As I said, the U.K. was planning to return to Benghazi.

Mr. Westmoreland. Uh-huh. And the Red Cross had left, right? I mean, I think they had gotten bombed or something.

Mr. [REDACTED] The ICRC had suspended operations, as I recall. I do not know at the time of my departure whether they had physically left.

Mr. Westmoreland. Do you think they left because they just didn't like it or for security reasons or food was bad or, I mean --

Mr. [REDACTED] I don't want to speak for their motivations --

Mr. Westmoreland. Right.

Mr. [REDACTED] -- sir. What I can tell you is that on the basis of my contact, including with the ICRC, they were aware of the security situation and that that was likely a factor in their decisions.

Mr. Westmoreland. Did you try to assure them that it was safe there?

Mr. [REDACTED] I did not, sir. I did not feel that it was my position to give assurances along those lines to anyone.

Mr. Westmoreland. No, I'm not asking that you gave them an assurance, but did you say anything like, man, I feel great here, you know, I feel safe? You know, not trying to give them any assurance of their safety but, you know, just saying, God, I don't understand why you all are leaving, you know. We had an IED that blew a hole in our wall and we're not going anywhere. And so --

Mr. [REDACTED] I don't recall. I certainly listened to the views of others, not just in this context but more broadly --

Mr. Westmoreland. Sure.

Mr. [REDACTED] -- and it would certainly represent our view.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q So, I wanted to step back just a moment. We talked about the QRF and 17 February militia. Was there also a local Guard Force present during your tenure in Benghazi?

A There was.

Q And was that the Blue Mountain Group?

A My recollection is that that was the security contractor, yes.

Q Okay. And during your time, do you recall whether there were any issues with the local Guard Force as far as absenteeism, not performing their duties?

A I don't recall any particular or pattern of problems. Certainly, the RSO staff focused on ensuring training for the local staff. Drills and so forth were quite common during my time there.

Q Now, were these trainings and drills for new hires or were they just conducted for all of the members of the local Guard Force?

A I don't know whether, if there were specific for new hires, but certainly the drills occurred at such times that it seemed to me, in my laymen's opinion, that many of the members of the staff would've been drilled on a recurring basis.

Q Was there any turnover with the local Guard Force during your time there?

A I don't recall.

Q So, we've talked about a couple of major events over in Benghazi. We talked a little bit about the national elections. We just talked a little bit about the international committee for the Red Cross suspending its operations in Benghazi. Do you recall whether -- do you recall the international committee for the Red Cross facilities being attacked near the beginning of July?

A I do recall. I do recall meeting with the resident ICRC representative in the wake of that.

Q Okay. And what do you recall about that event?

A I recall that she told me that their facility had been targeted overnight one night. I recall her expressing concern that there was a perception locally that the ICRC's focus was not on humanitarian work but rather that they had an agenda of converting the local population.

Q And had you also heard of those concerns in your discussions with any of the local population?

A Which concerns?

Q The concerns that the purpose of the ICRC was for, lack of a better term, proselytizing?

A As I recall in response to her noting that concern in subsequent meetings, I did raise that. And as I recall, local contacts did indicate to me that there were rumors in town along those lines.

Q During your meeting with the representative from the ICRC, did she discuss with you leaning towards a decision to suspend operations in Benghazi?

A I believe she did talk about suspending their operations as among the options they were considering, yes.

Q And did -- once -- when they suspended their operations, did you have any further discussions with her about the reason for their suspension?

A I don't recall the timing as to whether I spoke to her subsequent to that decision.

Q In wake of the attack on the ICRC, were there any changes

that were made at the compound regarding security?

A Certainly, I thought our awareness was heightened, certainly, in the wake of that. We tried to focus on, for example, hosting meetings rather than traveling to venues elsewhere around town.

Q Was there any concern that the facility or the compound would be attacked? Given that the attack occurred at the ICRC's facility, was there any concern that that -- that there would be an attack at the compound?

A We were certainly aware of the possibility of security incidents, potentially to include security incidents that might target the mission. We were aware of that.

RPTR KERR

EDTR HUMKE

[11:00 a.m.]

Q Were you aware of a previous attack on the ICRC in Benghazi prior to your arrival?

A I don't immediately recall.

Q Another event that occurred closer to the end of July was an abduction of Iranian members. They were possibly a part of the Red Crescent; do you recall that incident?

A I do.

Q And can you describe for us what you recall about that incident?

A I recall hearing reports about that incident. I remember discussing it with members of the international community there on the ground, and I remember placing a call in which I specifically discussed that. According to the information I understood from sources, the convoy of the Iranian representatives had been stopped while transiting at night and the individuals abducted by parties unknown. That case remained open at the time of my departure from Benghazi.

Q You said that it was unknown who the parties were that were involved in this event?

A In terms of responsibility --

Q Right. Yes.

A -- for the event, I heard theories. I did not hear

definitive facts about who the perpetrators were.

Q Were there any other abductions that occurred during your time -- during your time in Benghazi of other individuals that you were aware of?

A Yes. There was a case of a dual national who was briefly detained during a visit to Benghazi, and in the context of security incidents there, abductions were possible, certainly.

Q When you say "dual national," what do you mean by that?

A As I recall, the individual was an American citizen and also a national of another country, European country. I don't specifically recall which.

Q And do you recall why she was briefly detained? What do you recall about the events involving her detention?

A I recall that she had traveled to Benghazi for a seminar or symposium. The event was interrupted by individuals who claimed to represent a local militia. She, and as I recall a local Libyan national employee of her organization were detained, taken into custody. The American -- the dual national was released some hours later. I made a wide range of calls about the incident and spoke to her directly as well.

Q You said the event was interrupted. What do you mean by that?

A I mean my understanding is that at the time the seminar was ongoing, individuals claiming to represent a local militia entered the facility and took people. Well, and detained her and, as I recall,

one Libyan national employee of her organization.

Q Do you recall the local militia that the individuals claimed to represent?

A My recollection is that she, the American dual national, identified them as claiming to represent the Rafallah al-Sahati Brigade.

Q You said you made several calls regarding this incident. Who did you call?

A I spoke to other U.S. Government employees. As I recall, I spoke to the United Nations. As I recall, I spoke to the Libyan Foreign Ministry. As I recall, I spoke to a Libyan attorney I knew with whom I had previously discussed the situation there. I don't recall the -- specifically the additional calls I made.

Q Okay. Who were the U.S. Government employees that you contacted?

A In this context, what I would say is that I would look forward to further discussion in another venue.

Q Okay. Thank you. I see that I have approximately a minute remaining in my time, and so I think this would be a good time to take a break. We can go off the record. If you would like, we can take a few minutes break and then the minority will begin their questioning.

A Okay.

[Recess.]

Mr. Kenny. You all set, sir?

Mr. [REDACTED] I am ready when you are. Thank you.

Mr. Kenny. Great. We will go back on the record. The time is 11:23. Mr. [REDACTED], I would just like to take the opportunity real briefly here to reintroduce myself. My name is Peter Kenny. I am with the minority staff. I am joined here by two of my colleagues. This is our chief counsel, Heather Sawyer as well as Brent Woolfork on the end. And just on behalf of the Select Committee minority staff, we would like to take the opportunity just to thank you again for --

Mr. [REDACTED] Thank you.

Mr. Kenny. -- being here today and thank you as well for your service to our country in the diplomatic corps. We do understand that appearing before Congress can seem to be a daunting experience, so I just want to ensure that we are going to work with you to make this as straightforward --

Mr. [REDACTED] Thank you.

Mr. Kenny. -- and simple as possible. I also understand that you and your colleagues did lose friends and fellow patriots on the night of the attack, so we just again would like to thank you for being here, and with that, I guess we can begin.

EXAMINATION

BY MR. KENNY:

Q So I'd like to begin our hour just continuing the discussion that we started in the last hour.

A As you like.

Q Regarding your assignment and how you came to becoming the principal officer in Benghazi. You'd indicated that you had

volunteered for the service.

A Right.

Q And I'd just like to kind of begin by asking why you volunteered for that position and kind of what -- your understanding of what the principal officer role was in Benghazi prior to taking that position?

A Okay. I had served previously in the Middle East in the field, and in the Middle East bureau here in Washington. I was a close friend of Ambassador Stevens and with other individuals who were working on Libya and Libyan issues at that time. I had, at that time, arranged to extend my present assignment in the Department for a third year, and in connection with that, my supervisor had agreed that in the course of that third year I could do a temporary assignment overseas. I elected to volunteer for Libya as that temporary assignment and discussed it with Ambassador Stevens and others in the bureau at that time.

Libya was a particular object of interest to me, given the fact that for much of my career we did not have a diplomatic relationship with Libya. It was not a country in which one could serve, and I have ancestors who served in Libya at the time of the Italian occupation.

Q Okay. Thank you. That's very helpful. So, just to unpack that a little bit. So, you said that you had arranged to extend for a third year within the Department. So was the original arrangement for you to stay or spend a year in Libya?

A No, no, no. No, no. I was in a separate assignment.

Q Uh-huh.

A In the Department in Washington.

Q Okay.

A In the Bureau of International Organization Affairs. That was a 2-year assignment. I negotiated a 1-year extension of that assignment, and in that context, in discussions with my supervisor, asked if in the course of that third year in that job, I could take time out and do a temporary assignment overseas.

Q Okay.

A Which was the Libya assignment.

Q Okay. So you extended the 2-year tour and did a TDY --

A Correct.

Q -- to Benghazi. Okay. And you also mentioned, and this was in the last hour. I think you briefly touched on it here as well, that you had discussions with Ambassador Stevens and with some others to include Deputy Chief of Mission, Gregory Hicks.

A Correct.

Q In the course of those discussions, did either of those two individuals explain to you their sense of the mission and what the role of the U.S. presence in Benghazi was?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And what did they share with you?

A Ambassador Stevens had, of course, been in Benghazi during the revolution, had been a resident in Benghazi, for a time as well, and maintained a wide range of personal and professional contacts there

as well. In my discussions, Chris recalled that time very fondly, paid close and continuing attention to developments in Benghazi as an indicator of the mood in that part of the country during the transition. Chris told me, he encouraged me to establish a wide range of contacts to stay in close touch with Tripoli. He and I spoke or emailed fairly often, and I remained in close contact with Greg who I also knew previously following his arrival in Tripoli as DCM.

Q Okay. Did you have a sense of whether the Ambassador thought it was important for the U.S. to continue to maintain its presence in Benghazi at least during the period of your TDY?

A My sense was, that he thought it was important that we have a presence in Benghazi, that we have contacts in Benghazi, and in my discussions with him, I understood that he was in turn in discussions with Washington about the long-term disposition of a U.S. deep presence in Benghazi.

Q Okay. And did your sense of whether he viewed or felt the U.S. Mission was important, did that also carry forward beyond the elections or after the elections that continued to remain?

A Yes, that is my understanding based on conversations and -- or email exchanges we had even following the elections.

Q Okay. That's helpful. Can you maybe just take a little step back, and I think we touched on this in the last hour as well, just explain the role generally of Benghazi to the broader living society, what role they played where, you know, was it a major population center, a commercial center?

A Yes. Benghazi is the second largest city in Libya. It is the largest city in the east. Historically, eastern Libya and western Libya were separately administered, for example, during the Ottoman period. There is a rivalry between Benghazi and Tripoli, certainly, historically. During the time of the transition, there was widespread discussion of what the long-term governing arrangements for Libya would be, the extent to which there would be power sharing, devolution of authority at the local level, and what the arrangements would be for autonomy at the local or provincial level.

Benghazi was widely seen by inhabitants as the cradle of the revolution, and I thought our continuing presence was especially valued in that context, because they felt great pride in their accomplishment, and felt that we remained mindful of Benghazi's role and Benghazi's voice in Libya overall. They were also, in addition to that political aspect, broad opportunities for cultural engagement, longer term potentially for investment, in Benghazi and in the east more broadly. That's also, for example, where most of Libya's oil reserves are.

Q Okay. Now, I know - I believe you touched on this in the last hour. You discussed that you'd hosted over the course of your time in Benghazi a number of meetings with local contacts, local politicians at the Special Mission Compound. And we'd just like to get a sense of, you know, whether and why you felt it was important for the U.S. to have an actual physical presence in Benghazi to be there to meet with people as opposed to say a virtual presence?

A I thought it was very important for us to have a physical

presence there. I recall a number of local contacts, for example, who refused to go to Tripoli, which they associated very closely with the Qadhafi period. I felt it was extremely important that we maintain contact with local officials there, as well as local representatives to national parliamentary and national government as well who were from Benghazi, and particularly for us to be able to keep a very close eye on views in Benghazi during the formulation of the Libyan constitution.

Q Okay. And was that an important period in the reconstitution of the Libyan State in your view?

A In my view, it was very important.

Q Okay.

A Local contacts likened the election to a hurdle and the formulation of the constitution as the next hurdle.

Q And in order to obtain these views of the different relative parties in the constitution writing process, again, was it your understanding that -- was it your belief that having a physical presence was somehow more advantageous or superior to, for instance, just picking up the phone from Tripoli and calling contacts in Benghazi?

A In my view, in this context especially, there was no substitute for the ability to have face-to-face contact.

Q Okay. Thank you.

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q Just to follow up briefly. You mentioned a few times, and I think we all broadly understand, that this was a critical transitional period, and we've certainly heard, and I think understand kind of from

the perspective of the Libyans, and they voiced that with you. What, if you can help us understand as fully as we possibly can, from the United States' perspective, why was that important to us, for us to be there during that transition period?

A I felt that it was important for us to be there, as I said, both practically and symbolically to indicate that we remained attentive to developments in Libya, that we remained supportive of its peaceful transition, that we remained supportive of its territorial integrity. I thought that we provided unique, good offices among the various factions there.

For example, anecdotally, a number of Libyan contacts would contact me and ask me to then convey messages to other Libyan officials because we were uniquely positioned to do so. I think, broadly speaking, the prospect of separatism or separation of eastern Libya potentially through violent conflict, would have significant regional consequences. I think that was the driving force and rationale of our presence there.

Q And when you say "our presence there," is that -- did it encompass both the fact that certainly when possible, and the U.S. could reopen both the embassy in Tripoli it did so, but also maintain the presence in Benghazi, so is the there to encompass the fact that we had a presence in both of those locations?

A I was supportive of our continued presence in Benghazi. I felt that it was important for us to demonstrate that we were aware of local conditions, aware of local views, and that we continue to

support a peaceful process of transition to a stable representative and democratic national government there.

BY MR. KENNY:

Q And just one final question on this topic before we move forward here. You now mentioned the role of the U.S. and describe it as being unique? I think you used that word a few times. I'm just wondering, given the United Nations presence there, for instance, what was the advantage the U.S. had, vis-à-vis, some of the other foreign missions that were there who could also advocate for a free and democratic Libya?

A Certainly I felt that it was useful for us to be advocating in concert with other members of the international community, and we worked hard to do that with the local diplomatic representatives with the UN as well. From my perspective and based on my contacts with Libyan officials and Libyans from all walks of lives, the role of the United States was regarded as special.

There was, for example, extraordinary interest in American culture, American products, America at large. I met many Libyans who had grown up in a period where there was no diplomatic relationship between the countries, who expressed what they described as just enormous pent up demand or curiosity about America. About America as an example, about American experience as helpful to them as they negotiated their own transition.

Q Okay. Thank you. I think we may pick up on that at a later stage just on the interest of American culture.

Okay. So, having now discussed some of the benefits of being physically present in an area to develop contacts, obtain information, and to advocate, in the last hour we talked about your ability to move throughout Benghazi to meet with local contacts. I was wondering if you could just maybe discuss whether you also had the opportunity to visit or travel around the region as well and what you may have learned through any of those trips.

A I did. I traveled from Benghazi to the city of Cyrene, which is in between Benghazi and the Libyan Egyptian border. It is the site of a originally Greek and later Roman settlement, but it's along the main highway from Benghazi to the Egyptian border.

Q Okay. And did you glean any particular insights from that trip, that journey?

A I did. I felt that traffic was -- along the highway, traffic was open. I thought there was a good bit of commercial activity which locals told me was up markedly from previous months during the conflict. I spoke with locals in Cyrene, and they pointed out to me that just as Benghazi did not wish to be dominated by Tripoli, nor did the rest of the east necessarily want Benghazi and Benghazi alone to speak for the entire region, that there was -- that there were voices and views more broadly throughout the east. So I thought that reenforced the importance of maintaining that broad range of official and unofficial contacts.

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q From your perspective, you noted that commercial activity,

you felt, was on the rise. What was the significance? Was that a harbinger of improvements of a path forward, or what was the significance of seeing that kind of activity?

A I thought the visible uptick in economic activity, another example that trend would be, for example, construction in Benghazi, which had begun to resume. It indicated that goods could enter the country, were entering the country. It indicated that people had the necessary resources, for example, to make capital investments but also to buy more than just the necessities. It indicated to me that people were not necessarily dependent on international aid, that they had resources that they were able to spend for themselves, and it was to me an indicator of confidence in the future that people were being prepared to invest in businesses and other commercial activities as well.

Q And while you were there meeting with people, did issues around security, safety, concerns about either, you know, violence from militias, violence from organizations come up?

A Yes. I would say that the security situation was an important factor in the vast majority of my meetings with Libyans from all parties and from all walks of life.

Q And what was the sense that you were getting from those meetings? And I guess, in particular, the meeting that we're talking about now, we can talk about it as well more broadly, the sense that you were getting about what the primary concerns were?

A The primary concerns expressed to me were, that in the time

of the transition, that central Libyan authorities were facing great challenges in trying to develop the capability, to ensure their ability, to enforce the law, to deter violence, for example, and to take a range of militias to demobilize and to forge a coherent and a democratic and a representative security structure.

Q And did that differ -- with regard to your trips outside of Benghazi, did the sense of how people felt about it differ markedly inside Benghazi versus when you traveled outside Benghazi?

A My travel outside the city at large was limited to the trip to Cyrene. I felt that regional affiliations and tribal affiliations were a part of the equation and that often where people were from would be an important factor in their perspective. For example, one Libyan contact told me, "Of course I want everyone to demobilize. I just want to demobilize last." This was broadly echoed in the range of meetings that I had.

Q And what was your sense of the steps that were being taken to try to, I think as you put it, create a coherent democratic representative structure, how was that being worked out?

A One of the initiatives was the creation of something called the SSC, which predated my arrival in Benghazi.

Q And do you have a recollection of what those initials stood for?

A Supreme Security Council, as I recall.

Q And how was the Supreme Security Council helping to, you know, facilitate the demobilization and move to a more coherent --

A The vision --

Q -- structure? Yes.

A -- of the SSC would be that it would be temporary and transitional, it would be an umbrella, that individuals from various militias would enter the SSC, that over time they would leave the SSC, which was intended in part to provide them with job placement outside the security structure, but that it would be answerable to elected national authorities rather than to the individual lines of command within the militias themselves.

Q And how did you feel, during your time there -- you said it predated your arrival. How did you feel that process was going?

A I felt that it was moving forward fitfully. I spoke with the SSC commander in Benghazi often during my time there, as well as with other officials about their perspective on the SSC. Broadly, in my range of meetings, I would say there was a view, independent of political affiliation, that the SSC had not made enough progress quickly enough to the satisfaction of most of my contacts.

Q And from those contacts, did you get a sense of what, if anything, they were proposing to do as an alternative, like how they were proposing to improve that or if there was an alternative --

A There were funding concerns about the extent to which they could receive and rely on a funding stream from the central government. There were concerns expressed by people, that the SSC had not emerged as more than the sum of its parts, and I think practically, in the absence of what is often called a monopoly on the legitimate use of

force, that in that, it became possible for militias or criminals to take advantage of the security -- pardon me, the security situation.

Q Something that might be described as a security vacuum in some way?

A I recall others did use that term there. My observation was there were a number of players. What I recall most contacts expressing to me, was an absence of coordination, among the various players.

Q And I think we're going to get in -- in a little more depth with some of your assessments during the time, but just broadly, as we go into that, broadly speaking, did you feel over your time there that as the SSC was seeking to proceed but as you described it doing so only fitfully, and it sounds like there was, I think it's fair to say, frustration on the ground from the other parties involved in this effort to move forward, did you feel that that posed an increased risk at a security level to the Americans present in Benghazi during your time there?

A Broadly speaking, I felt that over the course of my time in Benghazi, the trend line with respect to security was of concern, in terms to the incidents that occurred. And, I can say that on the basis of my contacts there, many felt that the SSC had not deterred events and/or had not responded to them sufficiently.

Q So, I think -- that makes sense.

BY MR. KENNY:

Q So I have two followups on this discussion.

A Sure.

Q So you indicated that in the course of your meetings with local contacts, that the security situation was a topic that was frequently discussed.

A Uh-huh.

Q Is that right?

A Yes, correct.

Q And I'd just like to get your sense then, that the security situation was something that the Libyans were generally aware of and this was not an issue that was, for instance, being suppressed or there was some large -- large scale denial of the security challenges in the country, was it?

A Broadly, my impression from my contacts with the Libyans was that they did not hold back about anything, and I felt that they were very candid in expressing how they felt, what they had heard, for example, on a range of issues, security among them. But I think it is -- I would say that it was very much on people's minds, and that was expressed throughout my meetings.

Q Okay. And you mentioned the SSC, in response to a question about how the Libyan Government or transitional government was attempting to work through the challenge of militias. I'd just like to get your sense of what the challenges were with having the militias disarm and bringing them into some sort of a legitimate structure, as you referred to. What were the challenges associated with disarmament?

A Based principally on my discussions with SSC officials, they felt, for example, that the absence of a reliable funding stream could leave individual members of the SSC dependent on monies that they could have received from their militias or their tribes, for example. They felt it was bad for morale, they felt that it limited their ability to provide training, to procure equipment, for example. My sense was, from talking to officials in the SSC, that they realized this was a -- not going to be an overnight resolution but that they felt that made it important to move forward with all due speed.

Q And, could you just give us maybe a sense of the numbers of persons, personnel that were -- belonged to militias, associated with militias that would have had -- needed to be demobilized and brought under to a different structure? Was it a small number? Was it a large number?

A My recollection doesn't include specific hard numbers, but certainly it seemed to me, that we're certainly talking in the thousands.

Q Okay. So again, just to summarize before going to lunch. So, it sounds like the militias were challenged, the demobilization effort was a challenge. It was not something that you could just flip a switch and do overnight but that the Libyans were attempting to at least work through the problem. Is that a fair assessment?

A I think that is a fair assessment of the climate during my time there, yes.

Q Okay.

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q And what role did the drafting of the constitution and the effort to get the constitution in place, play in that dynamic, given that one of the issues you articulated a couple of times was the funding stream --

A Yes.

Q -- in a brief from the establishment of a centralized government with a constitution.

A Yes.

Q What role did work on the constitution play?

A There was the widespread expectation among my contacts in Benghazi that the process of drafting the constitution would enumerate funding powers, among others, that it would determine, for example, whether the power to tax would be vested exclusively at the level of the central government or at the local government. Whether, for example, and there were various approaches that were raised to me by various people as to whether the localities would receive blocks of funding to apportion as they saw fit, whether there would be separate budget line items for the law enforcement agencies, the military.

There was great interest in not only the questions of the funding, but also the questions of what authorities would be local or regional, what authorities would be centralized, and the expectation broadly across the political spectrum was that the constitution would be the vehicle to resolve these issues and to establish a social contract.

Q So, moving forward, I think you used the terms of "with all

due speed."

A Uh-huh.

Q That certainly would apply to trying to get the constitution up and running, drafted, agreed to?

A Yes. I can tell you that the Libyans' official unofficial with whom I spoke looked forward to a constitution that would reflect their views. I can recall a range of Libyans telling me that they did not expect that this would be easy, but they regarded it as being vitally necessary.

Q And, you had described for us a bit in the last hour, about the U.S. role in helping facilitate that and provide resources and examples, and was it your sense that they were -- that those resources were helpful and help in the move toward getting something in place and appreciated by the folks you were working with?

A I felt that our interest, our presence, and what insights we could offer were very much appreciated by the Libyans.

Q Okay.

Mr. Kenny. So --

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q Just to ask one final question before I turn it back to Peter.

And, during your time there, had the constitution gotten drafted, had these issues been resolved with the constitution, or was that still something that was a work in progress?

A That they had not been resolved, I can tell you that a number

of my contacts had been thinking about this issue, working on this issue. One contact told me he had taken the liberty of drafting a constitution, but the process to actually move forward had not yet been spelled out with specificity at the time of my departure.

Q Okay.

BY MR. KENNY:

Q So just to provide a brief overview here. What I would like to do now is shift the discussion over Heather -- you know, discussion that just touched on some of your sense of the security environment and how that changed over time. And I would like to use a document. This will be the first document we use. I'll mark it as an exhibit, so it will be Exhibit 1.

[██████████ Exhibit No. 1

Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. KENNY:

Q And I'd just like to use this to guide our discussion about the security situation. And just for the record, this is cable 12, Tripoli 952, dated August 8, 2012, entitled, quote, "The Guns of August: security in eastern Libya," close quote. Document number is C05262779.

A I do recognize the document.

Q Okay. Would you like to take a moment to review?

A If I may, please.

Q Please.

A Thank you.

Q Yes. And you mentioned just a moment ago that you recognize this document; is that right?

A I do.

Q Do you recall who drafted this document?

A I do.

Q And then who is that?

A I drafted the first draft of this document.

Q Okay.

A It was revised at Embassy Tripoli before its transmission.

Q Okay. Do you recall the impetus for this cable or why you initiated and wrote the first draft of it?

A Yes. In light of the various incidents that we had seen, in the course of my time there, I wanted to attempt to provide context, to try to explain, not only what was happening but why, in order to encapsulate the various accounts that I had provided of individual incidents, and to try to take a step back and provide some perspective on trends and underlying reasons.

Q And was that something that was new for you in terms of products that you had prepared previously as the principal officer of Benghazi? Did this represent kind of a first attempt at doing what you just described?

A This was, I think, the first attempt to look at the issue from that perspective. We had spent a good deal of time and effort and attention to reporting on various incidents, to reporting on individual meetings, to giving our impressions and observations and

analysis, and we tried to take a similar approach as well to other issues, this focus on security. We focused additionally in our analysis on the political climate. This was consistent with that, but this was my attempt to provide my views on the security situation at a more strategic level.

Q Okay. And I will note the date of the cable is August 8.

A Yes.

Q And this is roughly a month, just over a month after the July 7 elections?

A Yes.

Q About halfway?

A Yes.

Q During your tenure there. So, you just referred to some previous reporting that you had made on earlier incidents in Benghazi. Do you recall the process by which you would report on that? Would you -- for instance, you described a process by which you sent the draft to Embassy Tripoli for review.

A Correct.

Q Did your reporting on previous incidents also follow that process?

A As I recall, in the course of my time in Benghazi, Embassy Tripoli, transitioned from what had been its practice of providing what are called OIs, or Official Informal communication to the Department towards reporting more along these lines. My practice during my time initially was to provide an update from Benghazi on a range of issues,

whatever was happening in the city that day. That would go first to Tripoli and then on to Washington from there. This was my effort to contribute to the missions reporting on issues of concern. So, this was consistent with standard practice.

Q Okay. So, those initial reports that you provided, I think you mentioned that they were daily updates; is that right?

A Yes, that's correct.

Q And so, would that be something less formal than a cable?

A These would be, roughly speaking, less formal than a stand alone cable. These would cover a range of issues, meetings that I had had, events reported in the news, et cetera. This was designed to focus on the one issue of security.

Q Okay. And so the OIs that you just referred to, would that be how Embassy Tripoli would report back information to Main State?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And so, when you mention that they had transitioned, so the movement was from these OIs? Is that a less formal process? Would that just be, for instance, an email, would it be a telephone conference?

A I don't know whether the OIs were transmitted as cables or if they were prepared and then emailed.

Q Okay.

A In addition to the reporting, there were frequent telephonic communications as well. Between me and Benghazi and Tripoli and sometimes involving Washington as well.

Q Okay. I guess maybe I'm just trying to understand this. You used the word "transition." So, I'm just trying to understand, you described an OI.

A Yes.

Q What that is, and what the process is, but it transitioned from an OI to what was the --

A To more of a focus on discreet front channel reporting --

Q Okay.

A -- on individual issue.

Q And when you say "front channel," you mean a front channel cable?

A A front channel cable, yes.

Q Okay. That's helpful. Thank you. Do you recall why that transition was taking place?

A I don't recall.

Q Okay. So, returning just to this specific cable. You mentioned that you had drafted, at least written a first draft of this cable. Do you recall -- and you sent that to Embassy Tripoli. Do you recall what the response was when you submitted that cable?

A I recall that they sent back a version which reflected their input and their edits, which I recall seeing. And then, I recall that it was transmitted as a front channel.

Q I would just ask here and to the best of your recollection, do you recall whether those edits were -- did it take a heavy editing hand? Were they light edits to this document? Does this look largely

similar to the initial draft, the first draft that you wrote?

A My recollection is that it was completely consistent with countless edits to countless other cables I had written or edited in the course of my career.

Q Okay. So, does that mean it could be any of the above?

A I would not describe the edits as having been heavy, no.

Q Okay. What I would like to do is just read a brief --

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q Do you recall whether you disagreed with any of the edits?

A Foreign service officers are often accused of being sensitive as to the particular turn of phrase. I don't think I'm an extreme example of that sensitivity. I did not have any issues with the edits or the rephrasing. I did not object to the final version.

Q In terms of the substantive message that you were seeking to convey.

A I felt this accurately reflected that.

Q So, whatever edits that may have put it in language that would not have been your chosen language, you did not feel altered or --

A I did not feel that they fundamentally altered the message that I was trying to send.

Q Okay.

BY MR. KENNY:

Q So, I guess to be a little bit more specific here, I would like to read just a brief portion of the cable and just ask you a few questions about that. But, before we do so, I would just like to turn

to the second page. There is a signature line and below that, a drafted by, cleared by, and approved by line. The "drafted by" is redacted here.

But is it your understanding that your name would have appeared on that line if you submitted a first draft of this cable?

A My recollection is that I was listed either as the drafter or a drafter of the cable consistent with common practice in the Department.

Q Okay. That's helpful. So, I'd just like to direct your attention, this will -- we'll just read from the -- in paragraph 1 a few sentences here from the summary, and this portion of the cable reads, quote, "Since the eve of the elections, Benghazi has moved from trepidation to euphoria and back as a series of violent incidents has dominated the political landscape during the Ramadan holiday. These incidents have varied widely in motivation and severity. There have been abductions and assassinations, but there have also been false alarms and outright fabrications. The individual incidents have been organized, but this is not an organized campaign. What we are going through and what people here are resolved to get through is a confluence rather than a conspiracy," close quote. Do you recall that particular language there?

A I do.

Q Okay. And just to follow on to Heather's question there, is that fundamentally similar to the language that you recall submitting to Embassy Tripoli?

A Yes.

Q In substance? Okay. The first sentence appears to describe an arc that takes place from trepidation before the elections to euphoria immediately after and then back, is the language here. Was it your sense that the conditions, security conditions on the ground had kind of returned to where they were around the time of the elections?

A I felt in the immediate aftermath of the elections people were very proud of the accomplishment of the conduct of the elections in spite of some of the incidents immediately beforehand. I felt that in the weeks following the election, that concerns resumed because of the variety of violent incidents.

Q Okay. And a few of those incidents I think are laid out in the cable, but could you maybe just give us a sense of what those incidents were, what the violent incidents were?

A As previously mentioned, there were incidents involving the ICRC. There was the incident of the abduction of the Iranian delegation. There were incidents where government facilities were the site of explosions. There were incidents where former officials of the Qadhafi regime were targeted for assassination. There were reports of an increase in criminal activities as well.

Q Okay.

A Car theft, carjacking, for example.

Q Okay. So, it sounds like a pretty diverse array of incidents, and I think paragraph 3 actually refers specifically to some of the independent actors. I think you touched on that, the ordinary

criminals and former regime elements.

Did you have a sense of whether Americans were being targeted in these incidents?

A My sense was that there was violence that was by Libyans, directed at other Libyans, on the basis of faction, political affiliation. I felt that there was criminal violence as well. I felt that the ICRC and the Iranian delegation had been targeted. I felt it was possible that the international community could remain a target, and within that context that we, the United States, could be targeted. I felt that it was possible that we or other internationals or Libyans themselves could be in the wrong place at the wrong time as these incidents occurred.

Q Okay. And when you say it was possible the diplomatic community could use the word remain a target, are you referring specifically to the ICRC, the seven Iranians who were abducted?

A And the U.K. ambassador.

Q And the U.K. Okay. So, you are referring back to incidents that occurred further back.

A Yes.

Q Okay. Was your sense that the -- in the last hour you mentioned some discussions you had with the ICRC representatives as well as your local contacts about some of the causes of the violence as directed at them, and you said that they were specifically targeted. You mentioned that there was this local perception or you heard of a local perception that they were somehow converting local Libyans and

proselytizing. Did you feel that the ICRC was unique in that regard? Did that cause concern among others in the diplomatic community that they may also be targeted if the ICRC was being targeted for those reasons?

A Certainly there was concern within the diplomatic community. There was wide awareness of the incident. I can recall a number of Libyan contacts telling me that the ICRC was, to some extent, unique. A number of individuals specifically noted that their symbol itself, the cross, made them stand out, but on the basis of my contacts with the international community and with other diplomats, we were aware of the possibility, as I mentioned before.

A Okay. But the ICRC was viewed as different, you said, because they were unique, was that --

A I remember a number of locals and others in the diplomatic community expressing to me that the ICRC was, because of its symbol, considered to be a special case within that broad context.

Q Okay. So, the few sentences I just read to you there, one of them refers to there -- have also been false alarms and outright fabrications. Could you just help explain for us to the best of your understanding what that is referring to?

RPTR ZAMORA

EDTR CRYSTAL

[12:13 p.m.]

Mr. [REDACTED] I can recall that there were incidents that were reported or rumored that we were unable to confirm in our contacts with local officials. There were also various theories as to the motivations of incidents, as well as to the facts of what had actually happened.

BY MR. KENNY:

Q So was that a fairly common occurrence, reports that you were unable to corroborate or confirm during your time?

A I would say it was often the case where we were either unable to confirm that something had happened or that the reports or initial rumors were not consistent with what we subsequently heard from a range of contacts.

Q Okay. Could you just describe briefly for us the challenges that that presented in terms of reporting on the ground truths in Benghazi at the time.

A I felt it was a challenging environment. I felt that there was often very logical and legitimate reaction to initial reports. I felt it was my responsibility to try to get to ground truth in response to those, and I felt it was my responsibility to provide what confirmation or context I could on the basis of followup on the ground.

Q Okay. A few sentences ahead here it says, "Individual

incidents have been organized, but this is not an organized campaign." Just to the best of your recollection or your understanding, what did that mean?

A I felt that among the incidents there were those that were random, that were of opportunity, and I did not feel that this was a monolithic situation where there was one party responsible for the various incidents. By contrast, I felt that it reflected the presence of a number of parties and interests.

Q Okay. There's also a mention here from the last sentence that I read, it says, "What we are going through and what the people here are resolved to get through is a confluence rather than a conspiracy." It's a reference to the people here, what they're resolved to get through. What is your understanding of who is being referred to there?

A That refers to the confidence expressed by my range of local contacts that this was a phase, that even if things were perceived as getting worse, that they would get better, and that there was still faith in the prospect that a resolution of some of the underlying political issues would improve the security situation.

Q Okay. And, again, just to tie this back to our discussion about the role of the Supreme Security Council, as well as the proliferation of militias throughout Libya and the security challenges that they posed, did the views here, did they capture or encapsulate your understanding of the challenges as well?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And refer you to paragraph 4. There's a comment embedded there in a parenthetical. Reads, quote, "A surprising number of contacts here dismiss many of the recent incidents, particularly the bombs that were reportedly discovered and disarmed, as having been engineered by various security forces to discredit their rivals, to improve their own standing, and to seize prime real estate," close quote.

A Yes.

Q Is this a comment that you inserted into the cable?

A Yes, that is.

Q Okay. So this is your language here?

A Correct.

Q Okay. Can you explain just a little bit what this means?

A In the aftermath of a number of incidents in pulsing the system, in talking to local contacts, a number of them were of the view that the incidents as reported had, in fact, been engineered to cast certain parties in a favorable light, that they had averted an incident or diffused a bomb, for example. A number of Libyan contacts told me that, in their opinion, what was part of this issue was jockeying for economic advantage or real estate, for example, and that that was part of this broader security equation as well.

Q And we're nearing the end of our hour, but I'd like to just conclude with one final question. You had mentioned a moment ago that it had been reported to you or that your Libyan local contacts had told you that they had a sense that security conditions would in time get

better. I would just like to ask, did you, at least in part, share their optimism?

A I was very impressed by the optimism of so many of the Libyans with whom I spoke. And I felt that that optimism and that that faith in the future was a great asset to them. I felt that they were focusing, rightly, on the constitutional process as a way to address the underlying issues. I felt that there was a limited time in which to make that progress.

Q Thank you.

Mr. Kenny. We'll go off the record.

[Recess.]

Ms. Clarke. Go back on the record. And it's approximately 1:19.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q Mr. [REDACTED], I have just some followup questions from the previous hour that we'll start with.

A Please.

Q One thing that you talked about was that meetings, often meetings with members of the local -- local members of Benghazi, leaders, et cetera. During those meetings was a translator present, or how did you communicate with those individuals?

A It varied on their level of English-language fluency. Those who spoke English at a professional level, I would often conduct meetings with them face to face without translation. If that was not an option, I would rely on local staff to provide translation services from English to Arabic.

Q And was it just one particular individual of the local staff that would provide the translation, or did you rely on several individuals?

A I had occasion to rely on two of the local staff for translation at various times.

Ms. Jackson. And who were they?

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q Who were those individuals?

A I understand their names have been -- I have seen their names. [REDACTED], who was responsible for office management, and [REDACTED], who was our political analyst.

Q Did you rely on one more than the other?

A [REDACTED] probably translated in more of my meetings than [REDACTED] did.

Q And were these meetings that occurred on or off compound?

A On compound. I should add, this did not reflect lack of confidence in one or the other. This was merely a matter of scheduling.

Q Okay. And what about off compound, if you needed a translator, who would you use?

A I don't immediately recall an off-compound meeting where we needed translation. I can recall meetings with groups where my view was some of the members of the Libyan party might speak English better than others and that they might translate within or among themselves.

Q Okay. In the previous hour, we also -- you also touched on the British coming back to Benghazi, or considering bringing their presence back to Benghazi.

A Correct.

Q When were they proposing to come back to Benghazi?

A I don't remember when it was that they sent a team out to Benghazi. I recall meeting with them. We had them to dinner at the compound. We had stored some of their equipment on our compound,

including their vehicles. I don't remember if they had attached a target date to a prospective return to Benghazi.

Q And why did the team come to Benghazi? Were they gathering information about their proposal to reopen their presence in Benghazi?

A I understood that this was in the context of their taking a look at reopening on site, yes.

Q And did you have an understanding of what their security posture would be once they reopened?

A I don't recall going into that level of detail with them. We spoke generally about my impressions of the situation there based on my contacts with locals.

Q And what did you relay to them about your impressions of the situation?

A I recall telling them about the incidents that had occurred around the time of their visit. I apologize, I don't recall exactly when that was. But whatever would have happened in that immediate timeframe probably would've been the basis for our discussion.

Q Do you recall whether their visit occurred closer to your arrival in Benghazi, during the middle of your time in Benghazi, or closer to?

A I would be speculating in this, so, no, I don't recall.

Q Did you have any discussion with them about not necessarily their security posture, but were they intending to reopen in the same facility that they had used before, or were they intending to have a smaller presence?

A I don't recall them discussing in detail numbers or location.

Q Okay. And once your tenure ended in Benghazi, had the British actually come back to Benghazi and reopened a location?

A At the time of my departure, they had not.

Q Okay. You also talked about some of your travel outside of Benghazi. You mentioned that you only traveled to Cyrene. Is that correct?

A That is my recollection, yes.

Q Was there a reason why you didn't travel to other cities outside of Benghazi, such as Derna?

A Broadly speaking, Benghazi as the greatest population center was where most of the people were. During Ramadan, many people left the city on vacation. Some of my contacts even left the country. But even during Ramadan, I felt there were more people to see in the city than outside. And I had the opportunity occasionally to talk to people in Benghazi who had family or contacts or had recently visited other areas of the east as well.

Q Did the U.N. or any organization prohibit travel to Derna during your time?

A I recall that during my time there was an incident involving the U.N. in Derna. In the aftermath of that incident, I recall that they restricted travel there.

Q And was that restriction to individuals associated with the U.N. or did they disseminate the information to other Western entities?

A Their restriction governed their personnel, as I recall. Certainly communication within the diplomatic community was such that they shared that information, as we did share information on a wide range of issues.

Q Do you recall what incident occurred in Derna?

A I recall that it was an incident involving one or more of their vehicles transiting through Derna. But I don't remember more specifically what the nature of the incident was.

Q Was it some type of attack on their vehicles?

A I'm sorry. I simply -- I don't recall the specifics of the information. I recall talking to one of the U.N. reps in the aftermath during which they told me that they had restricted travel in the aftermath.

Q Also, we have previously talked about the SSC, and you mentioned that part of its role, I think, you said was to help the individuals that would come from the militias into the SSC, to help them gain employment.

A Uh-huh.

Q Where were those employment opportunities going to be?

A The intention was that this would be a mechanism to help people transition into other opportunities, for example, in the private sector. This was designed to help the process of demobilization and an interim step back into civilian employment.

Q Were there jobs in the private sector available to them at the time?

A Based on my contacts with people who were in business, investors, they expressed the view that there were economic opportunities there, for example, in construction potentially. My sense was that the people who knew the economy best felt that there were employment opportunities, yes.

Q Were any of those employment opportunities going to be with any type of security element for the Libyan Government, such as the military or local government, such as the police?

A I think that was consistent. I think that the function of the SSC was envisioned such that it would help people transition into the private sector, for example, to find employment, but that there would be some who would remain part of a national security structure that would be representative and democratic and consistent with international standards.

Q You mentioned that you met with the commander of the SSC several times. Was he based in Benghazi?

A I met with him in Benghazi. I spoke to him by phone as well. I don't know exactly where he was. I recall he was originally from Benghazi. I don't know if he was exclusively residing there.

Q In the discussion in the last hour you described the efforts of the SSC as moving forward fitfully. Can you elaborate on what you meant by that?

A I felt, and it was the view of those with whom I spoke, including SSC officials themselves, that the SSC was not making progress as quickly as had been hoped, either in terms of facilitating

demobilization or of deterring violent incidents.

Q Turning to Exhibit 1 that we had in the last hour, we were discussing this in the last hour, in the paragraph 3 you talk about the -- well, this cable talks about, "The absence of significant deterrence has contributed to a security vacuum that is being exploited by independent actors." Can you describe who those independent actors were?

A I felt that there were a range of actors and factors at that time, to include individual militias, to include criminal elements, to include former regime elements as well.

Q And elaborate, what do you mean by criminal elements?

A There were a number of incidents, car theft, carjackings, for example, that most of the people I spoke to regarded as having been motivated by profit, as a criminal enterprise, not motivated as a political statement, not specifically targeting a person because of their position or their politics, but simply because they may have happened to drive a nice car. I felt this was part of the broader equation.

Q And did you feel that this security vacuum presented an opportunity for groups that may have been considered Islamist extremists to gain a foothold?

A I felt that the absence of definitive authorities and the absence of a security environment that was sufficiently stable, that a range of actors could exploit the situation, to include those who were on the extreme spectrum.

Q Was there anything in your meetings with individuals or in your observation that led you to that conclusion?

A That was expressed to me by a range of Libyan contacts. Many Libyan contacts expressed to me their view that in the absence of progress with respect to the security situation that there could be a space for exploitation by extremists, both extremist Islamists, extremist federalists or separatists, as well as former regime elements.

Q During the last hour you also -- and correct me if I'm repeating your words incorrectly -- you said that you were concerned about the trendline with respect to the security situation?

A I noted the trendline over the course of my time there with respect to the security situation, yes.

Q And what did you note about that trendline?

A I felt that the number of security-related incidents, the frequency of those incidents, and the scale of the incidents were on the rise.

Q Did you relay that concern to individuals back at the Embassy in Tripoli?

A I made my views known to Tripoli, yes.

Q And generally how would you make those views known?

A I provided daily updates to Tripoli, as well as stand-alone messages, and in telephonic conversations as well.

Q Do you feel that your message was received or heard and that they were taking into consideration the information you were providing?

A I felt that my views were heard. I felt that they were taken into account. And I felt that those with whom I spoke in Tripoli were aware of my perspective based on my time there, yes.

Q Did you or were you aware if someone in Tripoli relayed your concerns back to Washington?

A Well, I think I would regard the transmission of the cable as one of the ways where I felt that my views were, in fact, conveyed back to Washington. My daily updates as well to Tripoli were also conveyed back to Washington as well.

Q Because of your view that the trendline was increasing in the frequency and severity of the security incidents, were there any changes or any additional requests that were made for the compound for security or for how movements were conducted?

A We certainly evaluated the security situation on an ongoing basis. There were instances, for example, where in light of incidents we would elect to host a meeting rather than visit the interlocutor. There were instances where we might decide not to venture outside the compound or to do so by a different route than we might otherwise, based on what was going on in and around town. So that was certainly a factor in how we did what we did.

Q I believe in the last hour you also mentioned, or it might have been brought up from this cable, that there was a feeling that the SSC had not responded sufficiently to security incidents. Can you explain what that concern was?

A A number of my Libyan contacts felt that the SSC in the

aftermath of individual incidents had not demonstrated its ability to investigate, to make arrests, for example, to identify those responsible, and to pursue the case. My contacts, by and large, expressed the view that the SSC's capabilities were limited.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Can I ask how that worked? I mean, did the SSC, was it a local police force? You described it as sort of an umbrella of militias. So did they, like, task out to certain militias doing X investigation and another militia gets Y investigation, or did they have a more formalized police department, such as a detectives unit and street patrols? Just how was the SSC configured?

A It was a hybrid and to some extent it was a work in progress. It was envisioned that individuals would join the SSC rather than units, rather than militias en masse. And my understanding, from individuals including those within the SSC, was this was intended to establish loyalty to the SSC as opposed to faction, tribe, militia, et cetera.

Because of widespread concerns about former regime elements, especially in the security services, a number of my Libyan contacts told me that there were concerns about the experience and the capacity of the SSC, that those with experience from before the revolution were discredited and disqualified because of their affiliation with the Qadhafi regime, and that those in the SSC may have lacked the professional training or experience to provide, for example, the investigative services that we associate with a robust and professional police service.

It was often described to me as a work in progress. I don't have particular visibility on how, for example, specific taskings were made as opposed to whether they were individual or to a local precinct, or what have you. But what I can tell you is that the perception by and large among the Libyans with whom I spoke was that there were questions regarding the SSC's capability to either deter incidents or to investigate them in their aftermath.

Q During your time there did they have any type of judicial process, such as were there arrests, were there prosecutions, were there judges, even on the lower level for the criminal element, for carjackings and robberies and other type of more everyday-type crime?

A Yes, there was a judicial system. There was both a civil judicial system and there was also a military judicial system. This was in part a remnant of the former regime, where, as was explained to me by Libyan attorneys, many crimes we would consider to be civil were tried in military channels in Libya.

The courts were up. The courts were running. Libyans expressed to me their view that arrests were not being -- that perhaps arrests were not being made. But there was a functioning court system. My view was, based on what Libyan contacts told me, that that was regarded as functional, but perhaps ultimately that too would need to be examined and reformed.

Q Okay.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q So in the last hour we also were talking about that the

Libyans felt that there was optimism regarding the security situation improving.

A I feel that my Libyan contacts expressed to me their general confidence about the future overall, specifically about the importance of making progress to resolve many of the political issues, and that they felt that in turn those would help address the security situation, yes.

Q Okay. And I believe you said that you felt that there was a limited time to progress towards that goal. Why did you feel that there was a limited time? Or can you elaborate more on what you meant by a limited time to progress towards that goal?

A I felt that there was a window of opportunity in the wake of the elections for the new government to demonstrate progress. I felt that the optimism among the Libyans with whom I met was not infinite and it would not be indefinite and that, by and large, they felt that there needed to be visible and credible progress politically in order for that optimism to be maintained and to be validated in fact.

Q And what would have happened if there wasn't visible and credible progress before that window of opportunity closed?

A Based on my contacts with Libyan officials, they felt that it could have a number of consequences, that it could reinforce extremist tendencies, that it could reinforce interest in separatism in Benghazi in the east, and they felt that the absence of development of an effective and representative government could also give rise to increased criminal activity to and through Libya.

Q Is separatism the same thing as federalism or is that something entirely different?

A The two are closely related and often synonymous based on my experience in the Libyan context. I felt that the vast majority of my contacts in Benghazi felt that there had to be an arrangement where the regions felt that they were involved in governance. There were some who regarded the only option for this as separation of the individual regions. There were many others, I thought more, who felt that there could be a federalist solution where powers could be shared between a federal and regional authorities. This was a frequent topic of conversation.

Q When you say regions, are you referring to eastern and western Benghazi, or were there more regions?

A Libya historically has three distinct regions: east, west, and south. The east, and Benghazi in particular within the east, is generally regarded as the voice of that sentiment.

Q And what was the U.S. interest? Was the U.S. interested in maintaining one single government or was it supportive of federalism or separatism?

A We were supportive of all Libyans participating in a peaceful political process that addressed the concerns of the public. We were concerned about the territorial integrity of Libya. We were concerned about the consequences of failure to reach such an accommodation. And I personally encouraged all Libyans to dedicate themselves to the peaceful resolution of that in a wide range of my

meetings with a wide range of my contacts.

Q What do you mean by concern with territorial integrity?

A Broadly speaking, attempts to redraw borders or attempts to divide the country.

Q And was that a concern that would have -- for instance, individuals that supported federalism, was that one of the things that they wanted to accomplish?

A That was often part of their rhetoric, reference to outright independence or division of the country. Equally, there were elements within the federalist camp who indicated to me that they were prepared to discuss governing arrangements and that their bottom line was less than independence but rather representation of their views and some governing authorities at local levels.

Q And we talked a little bit about the elections that occurred in July. Can you explain kind of how the governing structure was going to be set up, as far as, I think it was called the General National Congress. Is that correct?

A There was both the GNC and the NTC, yes.

Q Okay. And the NTC was the transitional government, correct?

A National Transitional Council, yes.

Q And then following the election, it became -- the election was to elect individuals to the GNC?

A That is my recollection, yes.

Q And so what type of representation would Benghazi, for

example, have in the GNC?

A The arrangements for the election specifically and then the governing bodies that would be determined by the election predate my arrival, so I'll, with the caveat that I will confine myself to my impressions and what I heard before, during, and after the elections, was that the elections were to elect representatives to the GNC based on population-based apportionment of seats. That those representatives would constitute a legislative body. Drawn from that body would be the prime minister and the other government ministers. And that during the tenure of the GNC there would be a process regarding the drafting of a new constitution.

Q The GNC wasn't a permanent solution?

A The GNC was to be elected for a set term.

Q Okay.

A The constitution was to have determined longer-term arrangements regarding governance. The expectation of the Libyans with whom I spoke were that there would remain under a new constitution an elected legislative branch within the new governing structures.

Q During the last hour part of the discussion you talked about that you felt that the international community, the attack on the ICRC and some of the other attacks were targeted, and that you felt that the international community would remain a target. Can you explain why you felt that the international community would remain a target?

A I felt that there remained the possibility that internationals in Benghazi could be the targets, could be incidentally

in the wrong place at the wrong time in the context of other incidents. I felt in the context of criminal activity that it would be possible for internationals, for example, to have their cars stolen or carjackings by criminal elements. I felt we could be in or around Benghazi at a time when there were incidents involving Libyan parties, and I felt that there was the possibility that extremist elements might seek to target the international community.

Q What made you think that there was that possibility?

A Based on my observations on the ground, based on my contacts with Libyan officials, and Libyans in all walks of life, there was concern expressed that the international community, and the United States within the international community, could be targeted because of the great symbolic impact of such attacks or if our policies were considered to be inimical to their views.

Q You mentioned earlier that in general you felt that, to paraphrase, that the Libyans were welcoming of the U.S. presence.

A Yes.

Q And how did that general concept of how Libyans felt about the U.S. presence square with your concern that there was a possibility that the U.S. could, as a member of the international community, could be attacked?

A I did feel that the vast majority of those in Benghazi, on the basis of my contacts across their political spectrum and beyond the political realm, appreciated and valued our presence. I felt that we were welcome there.

I felt at the same time that it would take but a small, violent extremist element to undertake attacks, contrary to what I felt was a public mood that was very welcoming and very appreciative of our presence there.

Q And during your time there did you feel that a small, extremist element had the resources to undertake an attack that would cause harm to the facility or cause harm to the international community, and especially to U.S. individuals who were present?

A I felt, based on the security context, based on the incidents that occurred during my time there, that that was possible.

Ms. Jackson. So did you see a coalescing of the extremist element or, I guess, are you saying that you saw them grow in fervor or dedication to not having Libya be a democracy?

Mr. [REDACTED] I felt that the situation was centrifugal, not centripetal. I thought that events were on a line where they could allow elements to become more extreme if they did not see the progress or the political accommodation.

I would not describe it as coalescence. I did not view it as parties coming together into a coherent opposition, quite to the contrary. I thought what could happen was further division and entrenchment of division and differences of opinion.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q Stepping back momentarily to the SSC, you were asked about the numbers of individuals that needed to be demobilized, and I think you said that there were thousands.

A My recollection, broadly speaking, was that we were talking numbers in the thousands, yes.

Q Do you recall whether that was more or less than 10,000? More or less than 20,000?

A I don't recall. Benghazi was itself part of a national issue of demobilization. I don't recall the scale other than to say that we were talking, specific to Benghazi, in the thousands. Beyond that, more specifically, or beyond that nationally, I simply don't know.

Q We also talked about, in our previous hour, we discussed that you felt that the size of the mission was about where it should be for a continued presence?

A I felt that we could be effective with a modest presence that would have the flexibility to be supplemented, for example, by visits by subject matter experts in particular areas. I did not think that an extremely large presence would be necessary or even necessarily constructive.

Q How did that relate to your feelings about the actual compound in which the mission was housed? Did you feel that the size of the compound itself was sufficient, was too large, too small?

A I felt the size of the compound was certainly adequate in terms of its physical area, and I felt that in the context of discussions regarding the long-term disposition of our presence there, that the property might have utility. And I would be happy to discuss that in further detail in another forum.

Q At the beginning of our time with you, you mentioned that you had some discussions with your predecessor, [REDACTED], in D.C.

A Yes.

Q Can you describe a little bit more about what those discussions consisted of, and were there any other individuals that were present during those discussions?

A There were not any other individuals present. [REDACTED] and I had lunch 1 day near the Department. We talked about the whole gamut of issues, what her experiences and perceptions were. I always make an effort to talk to my immediate predecessor when going into a new position. I find that in general very valuable. I appreciated my discussion with [REDACTED] as well.

Q During your time in Benghazi, did the Ambassador have opportunity to visit Benghazi?

A He did not visit Benghazi during my time there.

Q Did you have an opportunity to visit Tripoli during your time in Benghazi?

A When I departed Libya I traveled from Benghazi to Tripoli. I spent a day at the Embassy there and then I departed from Tripoli.

Q At some point during your tenure did the Ambassador plan to come to Benghazi during the time that you were going to be there?

A As I recall, yes. He did plan on visiting Benghazi, but did not make the trip during my tenure.

Q And do you recall the reasons why he did not make that trip?

A I remember talking to him and emailing with him about the trip. I remember him conveying that he couldn't do it at that time but looked forward to doing it at a future date that would work for him.

Q And prior to you leaving Benghazi had a future date been set for his visit to Benghazi?

A We were talking about him making the trip within a week or two after my departure.

Q When you traveled to Tripoli after leaving Benghazi, did you have a discussion with the Ambassador about his trip?

A The Ambassador was not in Libya at the time I transited through Tripoli.

Q Did you have a discussion with the DCM about his trip?

A I spoke to the DCM about a wide range of issues. I don't recall if we specifically discussed the Ambassador's trip in that context.

Q Do you ever recall if you were involved in any discussions about shortening the length of the Ambassador's trip to Benghazi?

A I recall that we discussed how he would spend time in Benghazi, with whom he would meet, for example. My recollection was that we were talking about a shorter rather than a longer duration in terms of his stay there.

Q And why was there discussion for a shorter rather than longer duration?

A Certainly, there was a lot going on in the country overall

at that time. I didn't want to take Chris away from his duties in Tripoli for a prolonged period of time. And I felt that in order to achieve his priorities he could do so in a reasonably brief visit.

Q And can you detail what some of those priorities for his trip to Benghazi were?

A I thought it would be very helpful for Chris, given his previous time in Benghazi and his continuing contacts there, if he were to meet with some of the newly elected officials. I recall that I encouraged him to meet with the Municipal Council, for example. I recall that we talked about how he could effectively engage in public diplomacy, as well.

Overall, I recall saying that I thought his engagement could be very helpful in underscoring the need for all parties on the ground to commit themselves to the political process.

Q Those were some of my followup questions, which took a majority of my time. And so I wanted to return back to where we left off in our questioning --

A As you like.

Q -- discussing some of the incidents that occurred in Benghazi during your tenure. I think the last thing that we discussed was the Iranian individuals that had been abducted. You mentioned that there that individuals felt that this SSC didn't respond appropriately to events. And I wanted to ask you, there were incidences other than these individuals where there were individuals who were abducted. Did the SSC play any role in helping those individuals, such as the woman

that we discussed earlier who was detained, or even these individuals, help -- I guess the word I'm looking for is free those individuals -- or was that something that happened between yourself or other members of the other Western countries in ensuring that those individuals were set free?

A What I recall about the specific incident regarding the American dual national was that we engaged with a very wide range of Libyan officials to deliver a consistent message to them. I don't have any insight as to what if any communication or interaction there was between or among the Libyan officials, but I do know that she was released that day. I do not know what happened behind the curtain.

Q Do you recall an incident involving the Sudanese consul?

A I do, yes.

Q And what do you recall about that incident?

A I recall that his vehicle was carjacked.

Q And was anyone apprehended for -- anyone arrested for that incident? Was there any further information that was provided other than the fact that his vehicle was carjacked?

A At the time of my departure, I don't believe that any arrests had been made.

Q Okay. Do you recall during your time in Benghazi -- this may have occurred over several weeks -- but a general evacuation of the Tibesti Hotel due to protests?

A I recall hearing about an incident at the Tibesti Hotel. I do seem to recall, yes, that there was an evacuation of the hotel.

Q And were there Western entities that were present at the hotel, at the Tibesti Hotel during your time there?

A I recall that Westerners had stayed at the Tibesti Hotel. I recall that the Tibesti was also used by some other countries' officials in Benghazi as well.

So I would say that Westerners had stayed there. I simply don't recall if any were staying there at that time congruent with the incident.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Do you recall that right before you left, and I believe this occurred on August 29, that the Libyan Government had issued a maximum state of alert countrywide?

A I remember press coverage of that. I remember being in communication with Embassy Tripoli about that. And I remember that in spite of our contacts in Benghazi, that we were unable to find a Libyan official who was aware of this declaration from Tripoli.

Q Had your counterparts in Tripoli, though, heard or received some sort of official notice from the Libyan Government in Tripoli that this maximum state of alert had been issued?

A I recall that what Tripoli conveyed to me was a media report.

Q Okay.

A I would add, as the son of a journalist, that that does not necessarily make it true.

Q We may have to release that part of the transcript to his father or mother, which is the one who's the journalist. I'm sorry,

but.

Was there any -- the media report, did it refer to any event that had either -- event or events that had occurred in the past or was upcoming that caused or purportedly caused this maximum state of alert? I mean, was there a date, was, like, September 1 an important date in Libyan history for military or revolutionary things, or was it a culmination of these security incidents? Or at least from the press reporting, what was attributed to this maximum state of alert?

A I recall that it occurred in the context of, as we previously discussed, the trendline. September 1 is the anniversary of the Qadhafi revolution, and I seem to recall that the media coverage did make reference to that.

Q To both the trendline of security incidents and the Qadhafi revolution or --

A To the latter, to the upcoming anniversary.

Q Okay. All right. When you arrived in Tripoli and met with the DCM did you have any discussions with the DCM about this maximum state of alert?

A I don't recall if that was one of the issues we discussed. Certainly we discussed the security situation in the context of our discussions overall.

Q And was there any discussion between you and the DCM about suspending movements from either Embassy Tripoli or any movements in Benghazi because of that?

A There was to be a gap between my departure and the arrival

of the next principal officer. In my absence, I don't know what, if any, movements were planned. Certainly during my time there we took all security-related factors into account in determining what to do and how to do it. It would certainly be consistent with that to be aware of and to factor that in.

RPTR KERR

EDTR HUMKE

[2:10 p.m.]

Q Was there any discussion between yourself and the DCM or yourself and others regarding canceling the Ambassador's upcoming trip?

A I remember we talked about what the -- what the timing of the trip should be both in the context of, who would be in Benghazi so that we could have a productive session, but certainly the security situation is a factor. It was a factor in my decisions, and certainly I wanted to make sure that the embassy in Tripoli was aware of my perspective as it made its decisions.

Q Did you make any recommendations that the Ambassador's trip should be shortened, postponed, or canceled?

A As I recall, our discussions were about a short trip, shorter rather than being on the longer side.

Q Okay, did you make a specific recommendation?

A I don't recall if I suggested that it be X number of days or hours. I recall that I was thinking shorter rather than longer.

Q So, perhaps -- do you recall if it was a recommendation that it just be a day long trip, in the morning, out at the end of the day?

A I don't recall that specifically.

Ms. Clarke. I think those are all the questions that we have for you in this setting, and so at this time we can go off the record, and

if you would like, we can take a break or --

A Sure.

[Recess.]

BY MR. KENNY:

Q Go back on the record. The time is 2:25. And again, Mr. [REDACTED], thank you again for your patience today. We are at the early afternoon here, and we'll try to work through some of these issues as quickly as possible with you.

A As you like.

Q In the course of discussion over the last hour, we had a discussion of some specific security incidents as well as kind of your assessment of the overall security environment in Libya. I was wondering if at least the beginning of our hour here we can take maybe a little bit of a step back, and I know there was a discussion about your stopover in Tripoli as you were transiting out of Libya.

A Uh-huh.

Q I'd like to focus kind of on the latter part of that August period during your waning days in Libya, and just to kind of assist our discussion here, we would like to go ahead and enter -- this will be Exhibit No. 2.

[REDACTED] Exhibit No. 2

Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. KENNY:

Q And just to briefly describe this document, this is an email from you to [REDACTED] dated August 29, 2012. The subject is

"Benghazi handoff notes" And the document number is C05390852. I can give you a moment just to refresh it. I'm going to direct your attention just to a few key parts beginning on the bottom of the second page, but if you would like to review the full document, I can certainly afford you that opportunity.

Okay. So, I would just like to point out for the record there is a section on security here. We can return to that.

A Okay.

Q We've had an extensive conversation about that today. We'd just like to direct your attention, though, to the second page, and just again to begin, there is a life services section here. And it discusses some of the services on whom you relied, and I know there was a discussion in one of the earlier rounds about the role of local staff at the compound.

And just so we can better understand what life was like on the compound during your time there. I know that there is a mention here of a serious morale issue. If you could just, you know, maybe, you know, help us understand some of these issues, some of these concerns?

A Sure. Undiplomatically put, the food was terrible. It was monotonous in the extreme. I found it to be suspect in origin and definition, and it was an easy decision to fast for Ramadan. We did, over the course of time, manage to effect some positive change, drawing on the kind services of other agencies who were able to provide some very welcome tutorials to our local cook, and I thought that that resulted in some improvement as well.

I would describe daily life, as often being rather monotonous, especially during Ramadan when the general pace of activity slowed perceptibly among the local community.

I thought it was very important to be attentive to morale. I think we did our best to keep our spirits up and to make things funny rather than tragic, during our time there, and again, these are administrative questions that were all part of a broader discussion about the ultimate nature of an American presence in Benghazi.

Q Okay. And just to better understand and returning to the top of the document, so again, you had written this to [REDACTED], and just for the purpose of the record, who is he?

A Mr. [REDACTED] was then assigned as the political counselor at the embassy in Tripoli, and he was to come out to Benghazi on an interim basis following my departure and prior to the arrival of the next principal officer.

Q Okay. And when the subject here says, "handoff notes," this was a document that you prepared to assist him --

A Yes.

Q -- in that transition period?

A Precisely.

Q Okay. And, in this document you would have raised issues that you thought were important for him to know before arriving at post?

A Precisely.

Q Okay. And the tragic comic who, to borrow from your language, being one of those?

A Indeed.

Q Okay. I would like to just draw your attention now to a little bit lower on that second page under the section heading "Upcoming Visits"?

A Uh-huh.

Q And there is a reference here to the Ambassador's visit. And we talked a little bit about that in the last hour. We may return to that in this hour as well. But, I would like to direct your attention to the second sentence here which appears to refer to a different trip.

And could you just explain to us what your understanding of what this event was?

A The reference being to that we're also likely to have the Boston Boys' Choir in town in September?

Q Yes.

A My recollection is that there were limited cultural events being planned in Libya by the P.D. section, public diplomacy section of the embassy in Tripoli. I had discussed with the embassy the importance of including Benghazi in such opportunities, just as we had discussed the importance of ensuring that people, students, for example, from Benghazi were included in opportunities to attend events, to go to the United States, et cetera, et cetera, so that we would have truly national coverage there.

As I recall, one of the trips that was coming up was of the Boston Boys' Choir and we had discussed them adding a Benghazi event to their schedule.

Q Okay. And you'd mentioned that this was part of some sort of public diplomacy outreach that was organized by the embassy; is that correct?

A Yes. That's my recollection.

Q So this is being coordinated, initiated by Embassy Tripoli; is that --

A That's my recollection also.

Q Okay. And in the course of doing so, they would have reached out to you at post to ask for your thoughts on the matter; is that right?

A We were in open communication, as I recall. I heard about this from them, yes.

Q Okay. And perhaps this will help with your recollection as well.

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q And admittedly, Peter is indulging me with this exhibit because it made me smile when I came across it.

A I see.

Q And I thought it might also make you smile to recall what at least appears to be planning for a more, I would say, fun --

A Okay.

Q -- an actually fun event. But -- so he is a little bit indulging me too.

A Okay.

BY MR. KENNY:

Q So we will mark this as Exhibit 3.

[██████████ Exhibit No. 3
Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. KENNY:

Q So, this is an email from you to ██████████
dated August 26, 2012, and the subject is "Re: American Music Abroad,
Boston Boys in Libya, Fall 2012."

A Uh-huh.

Q I'll just give you a moment to review.

A Yes.

Q Okay. And just to direct your attention to the top of the
page here. So, ██████████, and I hope I am pronouncing
his name correctly. We'll help our court reporter with the spelling
as well. Sends an email to you on August 26, same day, and says in
the email, quote, "██████, do you think a band program is something that
Benghazi could handle in November from security logistic or other
perspectives? Of course we would come out to help. I need to give
these guys an answer soon," close quote.

Same day you responded, quote, "We could definitely do it. I'm
sure the university would give us space if necessary, and if we wanted
to go big time, we could try at the theater at Cyrene", close quote.

And again just to tie this -- tie it back to our discussions about
security, tie it back to your discussion about the outreach efforts,
the public diplomacy as well as the optimism of letting people, you
even referred to their appetite for American cultural products. Could

you just explain for us -- help us understand --

A Sure.

Q -- here, you know, your approval of this effort?

A I thought -- well, I would say that I approved of this effort conceptually, in that, I felt it was very important and this was an issue that was raised with me repeatedly and at times pointedly by Libyan contacts, that they attach great value to being included in events that we were sponsoring ranging from cultural opportunities to academic exchanges, training programs, et cetera. This was consistent to the sensitivities of Benghazi that it receive a voice in -- in the affairs of Libya.

In response to this, I thought that this would be very welcome. As I mentioned, I thought the university would be a very logical partner for us in this regard. I had spoken to a number of academics, largely about the importance they attached to being part of our cultural programming, consistent with the great interest that many Libyans expressed in America and things American.

I would say that with this as with any other event, that we would always remain aware of the security situation, and if we felt that circumstances on the ground were in any way inappropriate, we would not move forward.

Q Okay.

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q So, just a couple of followup questions.

A Please.

Q Because part of why, when I said I -- made me smile was, you know, one of the things that's hard for the committee to understand and what we're all, I think, grappling very hard to understand, is what I think you've tried to capture a little for us today when you were talking about kind of what optimism existed and excitement about certain things. And this, to me, was an example of something that seemed, you know, certainly more fun, had certainly it's valuable cultural, connectivity purposes, but it seemed to capture to me a little bit statement of the dynamic of kind of potentially for someone on the ground, being in Benghazi and both understanding and keeping a clear eye on security.

But it did to me exhibit a certain sense of optimism that certainly if the planning was for November, that it would be possible to have this kind of a trip. Not that you would ignore what the situation was in this November, but there was a certain sense of optimism and a desire to keep doing really valuable work.

Can you share with us, you know, what that feeling was, what that dynamic was for you?

A Yes.

Q And if that's accurate in any way?

A Yes. Broadly, I think it is. And certainly I don't want to leave the impression that although security was a great concern, it was not the only issue. And security incidents were not the only events that occurred in Benghazi.

And in addition to my meetings that focused especially on that,

I had meetings that discussed potential investments, the construction sector, the oil sector, the new school year, and reforms of the educational system, opportunities for Libyan students to go and study in the United States. I felt it was very important for us to be responsive to this great demand.

I thought that it was best for us to plan for the prospect and have to adjust, if necessary, rather than not plan and presume that the worst contingency would in fact happen. And I felt that to the extent that we were able, to remain engaged, that we could not only respond to that sense of welcomeness but that we could in fact encourage it and promote it.

Q And so certainly, you know, as of, even toward the end of your tenure there and despite what you had done in terms of the planning, you said you certainly want to make sure that the United States was planning for the contingency, you also, at the same time, as this would exhibit, were in a forward looking way, trying to help plan to continue doing the really other core diplomatic work, and you still felt that was a valuable and a viable role and opportunity for the United States?

A I thought it was valuable, I thought it was viable, and I thought it was in fact the very essence of our presence there.

BY MR. KENNY:

Q Just real briefly again, looking at Exhibit 2, in the event that IT ends up being buried by so many other exhibits. I would just like to return here to the contact section, the top of the first page, that second paragraph that reads, "The contact list includes the other

members in the very select Benghazi diplomatic community, the Italians, Turks, Maltese, Tunisians, Egyptians, Moroccans, and Sudanese have permanent presences here and honorary councils represent the Swedes and Fins. The French are working on a cultural center, and the Brits are scheduled to reopen their office here on September 1, close quote."

I know in the last round there was a question posed to you about the status of the British Mission there.

A Right.

Q And this email is dated from August 29.

A Okay.

Q But did you have any insight after you left Benghazi about the status of the other missions, the other diplomatic missions in Benghazi?

A I did not. Following my departure, I'm simply not aware the disposition of the other missions on the ground.

Q Okay. It does appear here that there is a contingent, a cohort of other countries that were represented in Libya. What was your sense of why they viewed it as important to be in Benghazi specifically?

A My sense was that the various countries had made their own calculations as to their interests, and they had different priorities. For example, Italian ties to Libya are longstanding. There were a number of Italian nationals who were resident in Libya. Their consul spent a good bit of his time attending to the Italian community there, and there were also commercial interests and investments there.

There were also a large number of Egyptian guest workers in Libya, especially in the east. The Egyptian consul spent a great deal of his time attending to issues arising from the presence of that large Egyptian community here as well.

The Turkish consul, was extraordinarily well connected, and for example, the Turkish airline, as I recall, had been the first to reestablish direct air service to Benghazi. Turkish corporations were very visible in investment there, so other countries certainly saw interests and opportunities in Benghazi.

Q And part of the reason why we ask is there has been a public discussion about why the U.S. continued to remain in Benghazi. In the course of the discussion, there has been assertions that the U.S. was the last flag flying, so to speak, but it would appear, just based on this, at least at this point in time, that that may not be an entirely accurate statement or view. Is that --

A In my time there, we were never the only flag flying.

Q So, thank you. I think that's been very helpful for us. We would like to shift gears a little bit.

A Okay.

Q And work a little bit backwards in time, so, we'll be jumping around a little bit. But, I would like to focus in the mid August time period, so we'll -- Exhibit 1 was the Guns of August cable that was sent by Embassy Tripoli. You participated in the drafting of that. We'd just like to get your assessment or your view of what was the response either from embassy or from other places to that cable? Did

you hear any concerns that were raised specifically with you about that cable and the information that was in it, and what were the steps that post undertook in response to that?

A I spoke on one of our conference calls with Washington following the cable where I recall that the receipt of the cable was noted, and the effusive praise for which State Department has noted, I think someone said "nice cable." This is considered fawning praise in the State Department.

But, I don't want to suggest that, absent the cable, I felt that people were not paying attention or that the cable was the only mechanism by which we tried to make aware the embassy in Tripoli and Washington as to our views of the situation there. This was designed to encapsulate, but it is an example, rather than the only example of that.

Q And, when you say you spoke to somebody in D.C. just to specify, so your -- can you just maybe just explain to us your reporting structure as a principal officer? Did you report to Embassy Tripoli? How would that dynamic work?

A I would communicate in the first instance with Embassy Tripoli, usually with the deputy chief of mission, but depending on the issue, with others as well, and often there would be a conference call involving Embassy Tripoli, usually the deputy chief of mission and Washington based officials of the Near East bureau.

Q Okay. And would those be individuals associated with the Office of Maghreb Affairs within NEA?

A Correct, yes.

Q Okay. Do you recall in the course of your discussion with either Embassy Tripoli or with the Mag desk, any requests that post revisit or update tripwires that had been established for post?

A I recall that following the report of incident at the Tibesti Hotel, the DCM in Tripoli asked what impact this would have, what role this had relative to our tripwires. Before my departure, we convened a meeting of the EAC, the Emergency Action Committee, to talk about the security situation, and in that context, we took a look at what our tripwires would be.

Q Okay.

A In other words, what would obligate us to modify our operations or our posture.

Q Sure. And just, could you generally describe for us what the tripwire was or what your understanding of what they were at the time?

A At the time, the previous the tripwires -- and these are -- this is a living document. These are subject to review and modification. In the aftermath of the election and in light of the events prior to my departure, we took a look at the tripwires to take a look at the prospect of what security incidents, whether in frequency or duration or scale would obligate us to look at changing our posture, restricting our movements or operations.

Q Okay. And the Emergency Action Committee that you just referred to, would that have been the forum for discussing these types

of issues?

A That is the formal forum. I would note that that was hardly the only discussion of security, and indeed, virtually every discussion incorporated security related events and considerations.

Q Okay. Again, to help guide our discussion here, I would like to mark Exhibit 4.

[██████████ Exhibit No. 4
was marked for identification.]

BY MR. KENNY:

Q This is an email. It's from ██████████ to you. It's dated August 14, 2012. The subject reads, "Tripwires," and there is an attachment listed which is, quote, "Benghazi assessment of tripwires broached as of August 13.DOCX," close quote. I'll just give you a moment to review this document if you would like.

So, the cover email here reads, quote, "My comments are in yellow in the attached document. Perhaps we could use some of these as talking points in the EAC. ██████████," close quote?

A Yes.

Q Just to begin here, ██████████, who is he?

A He was, during his time in Benghazi, the senior RSO.

Q Okay. And RSO, regional security officer?

A Regional security officer.

Q And the attached document here, this assessment appears to list out tripwires. Under certain tripwires there appear to be some comments.

A Yes.

Q The copying is not the best, so it may be a little bit difficult in places to discern the comments from the tripwires, but I think, to the best of our understanding, the dash marks on the left signify each of those tripwires?

A Uh-huh.

Q So, do you see that?

A Right.

Q You know, with respect to these tripwires here, what -- do you know who was involved in setting these, or developing these tripwires?

A As I recall, the tripwires were a living document. First, the duration predated my arrival. Tripwires are reviewed and revised as appropriate based on events, and this was, as I recall, the basis for discussion of our EAC meeting.

Q Okay. And so, were you involved with the updating of this living document then, with respect just to the tripwires themselves?

A Yes, I was.

Q Okay. And could you just explain your role in that process?

A I chaired the discussion at the EAC at which these were discussed. Reviewing which events should represent tripwires for us moving to a heightened posture or towards consideration of authorized or ordered departure.

Q Okay. And was your understanding that the tripwires that previously existed, that those may have been based on some earlier

events that may have been overtaken?

A Again, not knowing the specifics of what happened before my arrival, that would have been my expectation, and certainly I regarded it as appropriate to continue to review, throughout my time there.

Q Okay. So these documents are organized, appears to be three sections, one section, "Events triggering a heightened security posture, another events triggering consideration of authorized departure, and finally events triggering consideration of ordered departure." Could you just help explain for us what those three categories mean?

A Broadly speaking, heightened security posture would be, a situation in which we would take steps that might include hosting meetings rather than traveling to them, restricting movement to or through certain areas, for example, on the basis of events. Authorized departure, is a status where emission based on security situation, affords staff the opportunity to leave post, if they so choose. Ordered departure, by contrast, is a circumstance by which departure of personnel from post, is directed and not optional.

Q Okay. Thank you. That is helpful. And again, there appear to be comments under each of those three categories for certain tripwires. And for these comments in particular, if I could draw your attention, do you recall whether you participated in the drafting of those comments? Do you recall whether it was the RSO who prepared those for your review or perhaps even anyone else?

A Overall, I would describe the mission as being extremely collaborative and very cooperative. My recollection is that [REDACTED] did these revisions. They are certainly consistent with the discussions that we all had about events. We shared information, to an extent beyond what I have seen in any of my other assignments throughout my career. And, I would like to say, that consistent with the highest praise one can give in the State Department, that I would unhesitatingly work again anywhere anytime with the officers I served with in Benghazi.

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q So, just along those lines. So, this particular EAC, who was participating in it? So, it was Mr. [REDACTED] and yourself?

A Right.

Q Who were the other participants?

A Some of the other RSO staff as well as other U.S. government representatives about whom I would be happy to speak in a different forum.

RPTR BAKER

EDTR CRYSTAL

[2:40 p.m.]

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q Was there anyone who wasn't in Benghazi participating by phone or in any other --

A I don't recall that we teleconferenced anyone else in. Our discussions were then conveyed to Embassy Tripoli.

Q And just in a generalized sense you described the three categories. Is it fair to say that they kind of go, whatever the tripwires are for to trigger heightened security, this is kind of in an ascending, I guess is the right word, level of seriousness, so from heightened to authorized, more serious tripwires, to order even more serious tripwires. Is that an accurate statement?

A Yes, broadly speaking, yes.

Q And did you feel that these tripwires themselves accurately reflected the range of considerations and security concerns that you felt were likely to be faced in Benghazi?

A I thought this reflected the range of challenges and the range of issues of concern that we understood based on our observation on the ground.

Q So with regard to setting up a good process for really understanding what the concerns were, really assessing those concerns, this tool, the tripwire tool, captured that in a robust way, it allowed

you to be able to make a really robust assessment of what posts needed to be doing?

A I thought it was extremely helpful, indeed necessary. I felt that security was a part of all of our discussions and all of our decisions. I thought it was helpful to have this formal framework as well, to put it in a rigorous and a routinized context, and to allow us to be able to periodically take a look back and determine where we were as opposed to where we had been previously.

BY MR. KENNY:

Q And so just so we better understand, so again in the email it says, "Perhaps we can use some of these in talking points in the EAC." And I think you mentioned that you did in fact use this document at least as a guide in that discussion. Is that accurate?

A As I recall, yes.

Q Okay. I'd like at this point to mark those exhibits 5.

[REDACTED] Exhibit No. 5

Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. KENNY:

Q So this is an email from Gregory Hicks to Ambassador Stevens dated August 15, 2012. The subject is "8/15 Update." Just note at the outset your name doesn't appear at the top of the thread here, but it does appear in an earlier email in the thread where you wrote to Gregory Hicks and [REDACTED]. That email is dated August 15, 2012. It has the same subject. Do you recall this email?

A I do. I welcome the opportunity to review it as well.

Q Okay. Please.

A Thank you.

Q And just a bit of housekeeping. So Exhibit 4, the document number is C05578623. Exhibit No. 5 is document number C05396708.

This email appears to be an unclassified readout of the EAC that we were just discussing where yourself, the security professionals at the post, had considered tripwires and your assessments or your views of those tripwires?

I would like to try to marry both of these documents and understand, I guess, first just taking a step back, the set of tripwires in the assessments, was this document thoroughly discussed in the EAC?

A As I recall it was, yes.

Q Okay. So these tripwires and these assessments were briefed and considered carefully by yourself and the other participants in the EAC?

A I certainly reviewed them and considered them very closely, and we certainly discussed them in the context of the EAC.

Q Okay. And so then here in Exhibit 5, you can just read a brief portion here, so at the beginning of the third paragraph it reads, quote, "We convened the EAC today, including all USG elements present, to review the situation and our security posture," close quote.

And jumping down, I will read through a few of these ticks here.

The first bullet reads, quote, "Agreed to review/revise the existing tripwires, which date to before the elections, to reflect present concerns," close quote.

The next bullet reads, quote, "Concluded that the situation merits concern and prudent risk management, particularly in light of recent incidents involving internationals as well as locals advocating priority issues such as human rights and women's participation."

The third reads, quote, "Recommended continued heightened security measures now in place," close quote.

The fourth reads, quote: "Recommended expansion of some precautionary measures," close quote, and proceeds to list a few of those.

Next item reads, quote, "Agreed to request a number of specific items/actions which we will spell out in a cable; and, Agreed to meet at least weekly in the future in light of the pace of developments on the ground," close quote.

So I would just like to ask first, given what we just discussed, that the Emergency Action Committee was the formal process by which a post would consider security incidents and whether to make any sort of adjustments to the security posture. And this document here, which appears to be a readout of the action items from that meeting, just, first, is this an accurate representation of the action items that came out of the EAC, to your recollection?

A To my recollection, yes, this is an accurate overview of the EAC.

Q Okay. We'll start with the second tick. I believe we discussed the first one here, which is to revise the tripwires. The second one referring to "the situation merits concern and prudent risk

management." Can you just maybe explain for us, we'll walk through each of these and maybe just kind of explain for us what they mean.

A Right. As it states, we concluded the situation merits concern. I believe given the array, the extent, the frequency of various security incidents, that the situation did merit concern. Accordingly, we worked hard to exercise prudent risk management, exercising, for example, with respect to our movements and the extent to which we maintained contacts to try to be as aware as possible as to the security environment.

Q Okay. In the third bullet here, it uses the term heightened security, recommended continued heightened security. Does that refer at all back to Exhibit 4, the first category, where you talk about events triggering a heightened security posture?

A Uh-huh.

Q Are those one and the same?

A Broadly speaking, yes. I feel that we were effectively at all times in a heightened security posture in that we were always attuned to the security situation and always factoring security into our decisions.

Q Okay. I know the fourth bullet there recommends some expansion of additional measures, additional precautionary measures. But this heightened security level, was there a recommendation that came out of the EAC that you should move, that post should move from one of the heightened security posture to perhaps an escalated level of security?

A I don't recall that we recommended moving from heightened posture to either authorized or ordered departure, for example. Within the context of heightened security posture we were always looking for ways that we could do more, that we could continue to do our utmost, and we specifically reference here drills, reduction of classified materials, as areas where we could be active and attentive.

Q Were those heightened security measures and the additional precautionary measures, were those, in your view, were those tailored to your understanding of what the threat or potential threat would look like in Benghazi against U.S. interests?

A They were tailored to what we had seen to date. They were tailored to what we thought could potentially occur as well.

Q The fifth tick here refers to a request for a number of specific items and actions. Do you recall that item?

A I recall making reference to it, yes.

Q Okay. Do you recall, here it says it will be spelled out in a cable, do you recall if that cable was ever sent?

A I don't recall if it was sent, if it was sent as a cable, or if it was communicated separately through DS channels. I don't recall.

Q Okay. So you never heard any additional information on the status of that request?

A I don't recall what the status of the recommendations were or their means of transmission.

Q Okay. And that's, again, because you believe that the RSO

on site would have handled that request?

A The technical security recommendations would appropriately go through the DS channels.

Q Okay. This general assessment or determination in the EAC to -- you said that you don't recall if there was a recommendation to elevate the security posture. Do you recall if anyone else had a recommendation within that EAC that post should take an enhanced view of security?

A As I recall, there was broad agreement at the meeting that we should all be prudent and attentive to the security situation. I felt that we all, all individuals and all agencies, were very mindful of that and always alert to ways that we could work to enhance our security.

Q Okay. And based on your understanding and your recollection of that broad agreement, do you recall if there was a recommendation or one of the recommendations that came out of the EAC was to move to an ordered departure status, for instance?

A I do not recall that there was a recommendation to move to either authorized or ordered departure.

Q I appreciate your patience and your indulgence. We have a few minutes left, so we would like to again shift gears and perhaps conclude our hour with another topic. This is one that was discussed at the outset of your interview today, and it relates to your assessment of the 17th February Martyrs Brigade. And to help guide our discussion I'd like to enter into the record, this will be Exhibit 6.

A Okay.

[REDACTED] Exhibit No. 6
Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. KENNY:

Q And just to identify this document, this is an email dated August 13, 2012. It's from Ambassador Stevens to you as well as Gregory Hicks. And the subject is, quote, "February 17/QRF contract," close quote. Document number is C05395770.

Do you recall this email exchange?

A I do, yes.

Q You may have alluded to it even earlier today?

A Uh-huh.

Q I just thought it would be helpful to lay this email on the table, and perhaps you could walk us through this discussion. This appears to be you raising for the Ambassador, raising for Embassy Tripoli, including Deputy Chief of Mission Gregory Hicks, concerns or -- I don't want to mischaracterize how you would characterize this -- but the issue of the February 17th and the status of their relationship with post. And I was wondering if just to start, if you could kind of walk us through that conversation from the beginning?

A Okay. I'm happy to do so.

The contractual arrangement with February 17 predated my arrival in Benghazi. The duration of the contract was, as I understood it, linked to the transition following the election of the new governing body. I felt that that gave us the opportunity to evaluate whether

we wanted to consider other options for the QRF. I felt that the QRF added value because, not least, its association with February 17.

But I did want to put on the Ambassador's screen questions which I felt were relevant in that context. Those included the propriety of the arrangement. Following the election of government, should we take advantage of the opportunity to try to establish a relationship with the government and its security organs rather than a militia? Should we take into consideration the alleged role of February 17 elements in some of the security incidents?

I thought that because of the situation with the contract, because of the recent elections, and because of the security climate, that we should review this and make a decision rather than allow inertia to dictate the continuation of the status quo.

Q So your initial email here, was that intended to be a recommendation for a specific course of action or was it merely just to initiate that discussion that you're referring to?

A I wanted to initiate the discussion. I knew that our relationship with February 17 dated back to Ambassador Stevens' own time in Benghazi when he initially arrived there. I very much valued his perspective on that because of that relation and because of his knowledge of the context that predated my arrival.

I did not have a recommendation, other than the recommendation that we think about this and make an affirmative decision one way or another.

Q Okay. That's helpful.

The Ambassador wrote to you, and I'd just like to read a portion of this to follow the chain, he wrote, quote, and this is August 12, quote, "Thanks for flagging this issue, [REDACTED]. It's one we debated last year, as well, when we initially started using them, although back then it was admittedly more defensible to use a militia because there was literally nothing else. Is there any plausible security entity we can rely on to replace Feb 17, or do you think they'll be a force on the ground for the near (ie, through the end of the year) future? If you think they're 'it' for the time being, it seems to me that it would make sense to continue to use them, even though it doesn't square perfectly with our 'rule of law' agenda," close quote.

You replied here, quote, "I think that 2/17 will remain the most significant force on the ground for the coming months, though I think others (the SSC, the army, individual contractors) could do the job," close quote.

And just to conclude the loop, the Ambassador responds to you, quote, "OK, sounds like a good plan," close quote.

So again in the context of what we were just discussing that you wanted to put this on the Ambassador's radar, did you feel that you had reached a place where you put relevant information on the table so that the Ambassador could make a decision on the way forward with February 17?

A I felt that I had raised the issue and put the relevant information forward. I felt that Ambassador Stevens' questions about local practices were valid and an important part of that discussion.

I thought this was the beginning of that decisionmaking process. I didn't feel that this was the end of the decisionmaking process.

Q Okay. And I note here that you do mention that, quote, "Why don't I see what the other Consulates do and see if there is an approximation of a local standard," close quote. Do you recall following up on that?

A I recall talking with others in the diplomatic community, and I recall that there was, in fact, no standard at that time, that there were exceptions, but there was not a rule as to what others in the diplomatic community did.

Q Okay. Outside of this discussion here, did you raise any concerns about the 17th February Martyrs Brigade with the Ambassador? Did you ever specifically advocate to him that that relationship should be terminated?

A I did not advocate to him that the relationship with 2/17 with respect to the QRF be terminated. I felt that we were considering the issue. I thought that we were asking the right questions in order to reach a decision.

More broadly, I did raise with the Ambassador February 17 in light of the widespread view that elements of February 17 were involved in some of the recent issues, and I did recommend that the Ambassador meet with February 17 representatives on his planned trip to Benghazi.

Q Okay.

Ms. Sawyer. Was he receptive to that suggestion, that he meet, when he was going to be in town, that he meet with February 17?

Mr. [REDACTED] Yes, he was.

Ms. Sawyer. And was he -- I mean, it sounds like, certainly from the tenor of the exchange, that he was certainly receptive to revisiting the issue, exploring other options, gathering as much information, and that you were certainly during the remainder of your time certainly in the process of doing that and doing that for decisionmaking going forward.

Mr. [REDACTED] Chris was a personal friend and a professional colleague. Often it can be very difficult to work for a personal friend. Quite to the contrary in this instance, I feel that he was, in spite of his own experience on the ground, always receptive to what I had to say, and I will never forget that.

Mr. Kenny. Go off the record.

[Discussion off the record.]

Mr. Kenny. So pursuant to an agreement with the majority staff, we are going to continue for a brief period here, and then move and adjourn into a classified setting.

Does that sound fair?

Ms. Jackson. Correct.

Ms. Sawyer. So I just wanted to revisit briefly, at the end of when we concluded you had mentioned that working sometimes with friends can be difficult and that hadn't been the case here. But I also wondered if you had a sense, in addition to certainly being respectful to your feedback as to, you know, whether the Ambassador himself was also very attuned and knowledgeable about Benghazi, both with regard

to security and the challenges of security in Benghazi, and then Benghazi in terms of its -- the opportunities that it presented? Was he fully familiar with both the security side and the opportunity side?

Mr. [REDACTED] I would say that Chris was regarded by me and more broadly as the expert on Benghazi. And because of his presence and his role in Benghazi during the darkest times, that he enjoyed credibility there that no one else did or could. And I think he remained very interested in and aware of developments there, be they problems or be they opportunities.

BY MR. KENNY:

Q I would just like to take a brief moment here and turn our discussion to the Accountability Review Board --

A Of course.

Q -- and the Accountability Review Board process.

First of all, I'd just like to ask you, were you interviewed by the ARB?

A I was.

Q Okay. Do you recall who it was that you met with? Was it the full Board, certain Board members?

A I recall it was the full Board. I recall Ambassador Pickering, Admiral Mullen, Mr. Shinnick. Her name escapes me, but I recall she had been the leader of one of the United Nations agencies who was also on the. And I recall staff present as well.

Q Okay. Does the name Catherine Bertini --

A It does, in fact. Thank you.

Q In the course of your interview were you given the opportunity to provide information that you deemed to be pertinent?

A I provided written information to the Accountability Review Board and then met with them, during which time I felt that I was afforded the opportunity to give them my perspective based on my time there, yes.

Q Okay. And did you provide all information that you considered to be pertinent?

A I did.

Q There have been various accusations about the ARB, the process employed. I'd just like to ask you, were you ever asked or ordered not to provide information to the ARB?

A Never.

Q Were you ever asked or ordered to conceal or destroy information from the ARB?

A Never. Quite to the contrary.

Q Okay. And have you had an opportunity to read the ARB report?

A I have not read the report.

Q Okay. So that may abbreviate our discussion to a certain extent here. So neither the classified nor the --

A Neither/nor.

Q Okay. So appreciate your indulgence. You haven't read the ARB report or its findings. I would just like to read for you, so perhaps you may be viewing this for the first time, a brief portion,

and we think that this is relevant, especially in the discussion that we had in the previous rounds about the security situation in Benghazi and how that changed during your time there. So we'll go ahead and mark this Exhibit 7.

[REDACTED] Exhibit No. 7

Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. KENNY:

Q This is a complete copy of the Accountability Review Board report. It's the unclassified version, it's publicly available, and it was released in the December 2012 timeframe. Won't ask you to read the entire thing right now, but would like to direct your attention to page 15. And this appears under a section, if you flip back the previous page, on page 13, the heading for this section is "Political and Security Context Prior to the Attacks." So again, returning to Page 15, I'd just like to read a portion here. First give you the opportunity to read page 15 and 16.

A Thank you.

Q Of course. So to refer back to the top of page 15. And, again, we do appreciate your indulgence here. I'd just like to read a brief portion of this.

The ARB found that, quote, "Throughout Libya, the security vacuum left by Qadhafi's departure, the continued presence of pro-Qadhafi supporters, the prevalence of and easy access to weapons, the inability of the interim government to reestablish a strong security apparatus, and the resulting weakness of those security forces that remained led

to a volatile situation in which militias previously united in opposition to Qadhafi were now jockeying for position in the new Libya. Frequent clashes, including assassinations, took place between contesting militias. Fundamentalist influence with Salafi and al Qaeda connections was also growing, including notably in the eastern region. Public attitudes in Benghazi continued to be positive toward Americans, and it was generally seen as safer for Americans given U.S. support for the TNC during the war. However, 2012 saw an overall deterioration of the security environment in Benghazi as highlighted by a series of security incidents involving the Special Mission, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and third country nationals and diplomats," close quote.

The ARB then proceeds to list a series of security incidents, includes certain events that occurred or incidents that happened while you were in Benghazi, such as the August 5, 2012, attack on the ICRC in Misrata, the August 9, 2012, abduction of an American dual national that we have discussed and referenced in the previous hours, as well as an attack on an Egyptian diplomat's vehicle.

The ARB continues, on Page 16, quote, "It is worth noting that the events above took place against a general backdrop of political violence, assassinations targeting former regime officials, lawlessness, and an overarching sense of central government authority in eastern Libya. While the June 6 IED at the SMC and the May ICRC attack were claimed by the same group, none of the remaining attacks were viewed in Tripoli and Benghazi as linked or having common

perpetrators, which were not viewed as linked or having common perpetrators," close quote.

And the reason that we bring this portion of the ARB up, there's been an extensive conversation about the security environment in Benghazi while you were posted there. I would just like to ask for your response to this passage, this description of the security environment. Did the ARB generally capture your views in Benghazi during this period?

A I feel that this passage is broadly consonant with my impressions, yes.

Q Okay. Is there anything that was left out that would help enrich our understanding of the events leading up to September 11?

A I don't believe so. I think this is -- the passage I've read I think is consistent with my observation and consistent with my discussion with the ARB.

Q Okay. I'd like to shift gears once again and I'd like to ask you a series of questions about the attacks and public allegations that have been made about the attacks. It's our understanding the committee is investigating these allegations, so we've taken the opportunity to ask as many witnesses as we can about them. Just ask for you to bear with us as we work through these. I'll just ask whether you have evidence or information that could corroborate or support any of these allegations, and then we can move on from there.

A Sure.

Q It has been alleged that Secretary of State Clinton

intentionally blocked military action on the night of the attacks. One Congressman has speculated that, quote, "Secretary Clinton told Leon Panetta to stand down," close quote, and this resulted in the Defense Department not sending more assets to help in Benghazi.

Do you have any evidence that Secretary of State Clinton ordered Secretary of Defense Panetta to, quote, "stand down," close quote, on the nights of the attacks?

A None.

Q Do you have any evidence that Secretary of State Clinton issued any kind of order to Secretary of Defense Panetta on the night of the attacks?

A None.

Q It has been alleged that Secretary Clinton personally signed an April 2012 cable denying security to Libya. The Washington Post Fact Checker evaluated this claim and gave it four Pinnocchios, its highest award for false claims.

Do you have any evidence that Secretary Clinton personally signed an April 2012 cable denying security resources to Libya?

A None.

Q Do you have any evidence that Secretary Clinton was personally involved in providing specific instruction on day-to-day security resources in Benghazi?

A None.

Q It has been alleged that Secretary Clinton misrepresented or fabricated intelligence on the risk posed by Qadhafi to his own

people in order to garner support for military operations in Libya in the spring of 2011.

Do you have any evidence that Secretary Clinton misrepresented or fabricated intelligence on the risk posed by Qadhafi to his own people in order to garner support for military operations in Libya in spring 2011?

A None.

Q It has been alleged that the U.S. mission in Benghazi included transferring weapons to Syrian rebels or other countries. A bipartisan report issued by the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence found, quote, "The CIA was not collecting and shipping arms from Libya to Syria," close quote, and they found, quote, "no support for this allegation," close quote.

Do you have any evidence to contradict the House Intelligence Committee's bipartisan report finding the CIA was not shipping arms from Libya to Syria?

A None.

Q Do you have any evidence that the U.S. facilities in Benghazi were being used to facilitate weapons transfers from Libya to Syria or to any other foreign country?

A None.

Q A team of CIA security personnel was temporarily delayed from departing the Annex to assist the Special Mission Compound, and there have been a number of allegations about the cause and the appropriateness of that delay. The House Intelligence Committee

issued a bipartisan report concluding that the team was not ordered to, quote, "stand down," close quote, but that instead there were tactical disagreements on the ground over how quickly to depart.

Do you have any evidence that would contradict the House Intelligence Committee's finding that there was no stand down order to CIA personnel?

A None.

Q Putting aside whether you personally agree with the decision to delay or think it was the right decision, do you have any evidence that there was, quote, "bad," close quote, or improper reason behind the temporary delay of CIA security personnel who departed the Annex to assist the Special Mission Compound?

A None.

Q A concern has been raised by one individual that in the course of producing documents to the Accountability Review Board damaging documents may have been removed or scrubbed out of that production.

Do you have any evidence that anyone at the State Department removed or scrubbed damaging documents from the materials that were provided to the ARB?

A None.

Q Do you have any evidence that anyone at the State Department directed anyone else at the State Department to remove or scrub damaging documents from the materials that were provided to the ARB?

A None.

Q Let me ask these questions also for documents that were provided to Congress. Do you have any evidence that anyone at the State Department removed or scrubbed damaging documents from the materials that were provided to Congress?

A None.

Q It has been alleged that CIA Deputy Director Michael Morell altered unclassified talking points about the Benghazi attacks for political reasons and that he then misrepresented his actions when he told Congress that the CIA, quote, "faithfully performed our duties in accordance with the highest standards of objectivity and nonpartisanship," close quote.

Do you have any evidence that CIA Deputy Director Mike Morell gave false or intentionally misleading testimony to Congress about the Benghazi talking points?

A None.

Q Do you have any evidence that CIA Deputy Director Morell altered the talking points provided to Congress for political reasons?

A None.

Q It has been alleged that Ambassador Susan Rice made an, quote, "intentional misrepresentation," close quote, when she spoke on the Sunday talk shows about the Benghazi attacks.

Do you have any evidence that Ambassador Rice intentionally misrepresented facts about the Benghazi attacks on the Sunday talk shows?

A None.

Q It has been alleged that the President of the United States was, quote, "virtually AWOL as Commander in Chief," close quote, on the night of the attacks and that he was, quote, "missing in action," close quote.

Do you have any evidence to support the allegation that the President was virtually AWOL as Commander in Chief or missing in action on the night of the attacks?

A None.

Q It has further been alleged that a team of four military personnel at Embassy Tripoli on the night of the attacks were considering flying on the second plane to Benghazi but were ordered by their superiors to, quote, "stand down," close quote, meaning to cease all operations. Military officials have stated that those four individuals were instead ordered to, quote, "remain in place," close quote, in Tripoli to provide security and medical assistance in their current location. The Republican staff report issued by the House Armed Services Committee found that, quote, "There was no stand down order issued to U.S. military personnel in Tripoli who sought to join the fight in Benghazi," close quote.

Do you have any evidence to contradict the conclusion of the House Armed Services Committee that there was no stand down order issued to U.S. military personnel Tripoli who sought to join the fight in Benghazi?

A None.

Q It has been alleged that the military failed to deploy

assets on the night of the attack that would have saved lives. However, former Republican Congressman Howard "Buck" McKeon, the former chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, conducted a review of the attacks, after which he stated, quote, "Given where the troops were, how quickly the thing all happened, and how quickly it dissipated, we probably couldn't have done more than we did," close quote.

Do you have any evidence to contradict Congressman McKeon's conclusion?

A None.

Q Do you have any evidence that the Pentagon had military assets available to them on the night of the attacks that could have saved lives but that the Pentagon leadership intentionally decided not to deploy?

A None.

Mr. Kenny. With that, we will go off the record.

[Whereupon, at 3:45 p.m., the interview was concluded.]

Certificate of Deponent/Interviewee

I have read the foregoing ____ pages, which contain the correct transcript of the answers made by me to the questions therein recorded.

Witness Name

Date

Errata Sheet

Select Committee on Benghazi

The witness did not respond to multiple contacts from the State Department requesting corrections to the accompanying transcript.